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I
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Early
Spiritualism
Box 1
F
4

THE

WILDFIRE CLUB.

BY

EMMA HARDINGE.

That the dead are seen no more I will not undertake to maintain, against the concurrent testimony of all ages and all nations. There is no people, rude or unlearned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth.

Vide "RASSELAS," DR. JOHNSON.

Spirit is like the thread whereon are strung
The beads or worlds of life. It may be here,
It may be there, that I shall live again. * * *
But live again I shall, where'er it be.

FESTUS.

BOSTON:
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1861.

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Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1861, by

CHARLES J. PETERS.

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

STEREOTYPED AT THE

BOSTON STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY.

TO THEE,

MY MOTHER,

MY YOUNGEST BRAIN-CHILD COMES;

A TOKEN OF A LOVE AND GRATITUDE WHICH WORDS MAY MAR,

BUT NEVER CAN EXPRESS.

I GIVE THEE THAT WHICH IS THINE OWN ALREADY.

My Book, My Self, My All.

EMMA HARDINGE.

THE WILDFIRE CLUB.

MEMBERS.

I. . . . THE PRINCESS.

II. . . . THE MONOMANIAC.

III. . . . THE HAUNTED GRANGE.

IV. . . . LIFE.

V. . . . MARGARET INFELIX.

VI. . . . THE IMPROVVISATORE.

VII. . . . THE WITCH OF LOWENTHAL.

VIII. . . . THE PHANTOM MOTHER.

IX. . . . LIVING PICTURES.

X. . . . SANDFORD GHOST.

XI. . . . THE STRANGER GUEST.

XII. . . . FAITH.

XIII. . . . THE WILDFIRE CLUB.

XIV. . . . THE AUTHORESS, E. H.

ADDRESS TO THE WILDFIRES.

When I glance over the names I have included in the above ominous title, I feel as if you, O my phantom people! children of my memory! cherished subjects of many a sublime lesson, which your histories have read me, deserve some apology for the strange classification which I have made of you, beneath the cognomen of "The Wildfire Club." Sweet faces, angelic in their purity and patience, peep out from my very inkstand, and form themselves into patterns all over my paper, in silent yet piteous protest against the demoniac name.

My noble Improvvisatore, and fair Gabriella, faithful Hannah of the Grange, and reverend old Tom Martin, gentle Scottish Mary, and Margaret Infelix, can the flitting night-fires of corruption and unreality be gleaming on those brows now radiant with light from the land of never-setting suns? Let your own life histories answer the question — and so let every question be settled between humanity and its accusers. Say what it will, the world may call names, and give titles, but can never *create* character, or change life histories. Life is too strong for the world's tongue, and the still small voice of truth will make itself heard when the

fires of passion are burnt out, and the whirlwind of slander has spent its fury. And yet whenever the fitful light of a half-revealed science flashes up from the bogs of ignorance, straightway the world cries, "Beware! it is a will-o'-the-wisp." When some lightning soul cuts its way from the clouds of conservatism into the free air of investigation, the world regards the fire-streaked footprints of the pioneer aghast, and closing doors and windows against the Divine Messenger, murmurs from behind the shutters of pride and prejudice, "Beware the Wildfire!" Whenever the giant arm of reform stretches up its mighty proportions to reach the fruit which pygmies fail even to discern, the murmurs swell to a curse; the anathema of "presumption" is hissed against the man of the future, and ostrich-like they hide their heads in the sands of old opinions, lest they should be found bearing witness to the daring feat of plucking Heaven's own fruit, the tree of knowledge. 'Tis chiefly, however, when the seal of the last dread enemy, DEATH, is broken, that the *human pack gives tongue.* The shape that brings the revelation may be fair as thine, sweet Gabriella, — or homely, simple, and factarian as poor old patched Tom Martin's, — it matters not! Every gleam of light that flashes from the eastern sky of dawning science must be measured by the quenched lamps of long ago, and, if they be found too bright for owlish eyes to bear, must be chased back again to Cimmerian gloom with the cry of "Wildfires! Wildfires!" And so, my band of beautiful and true! my precious faces gleaming through the rents, which the beams of truth have torn in the veil of mystery! be content to know that whilst the world will call thee "Wildfires," they cannot *make* thee so. If thou art

true thyself, thou'lt live to prove it, and even in the shadow of the world's hard thoughts, with gloomy shroud of superstitious fear upon thee; thou art enshrined too in my heart's dear love; regarded there as angel teachers, ministers of flame, with Pentecostal tongues shaking the house of death, and marking with living light the characters of Life Immortal on that world made up of grains as small as the atoms of these our revelations.

Then bear thy brand a while, my burning lamp! The day shall come when all shall know thee as thou art; and though the glimmering lights of this poor "Wildfire Club" shine with no greater force than firefly sparkles, they have their part in making up the rays of that eternal sun — THE INFINITY OF TRUTH — that lives forever. And so will these tiny sparks; ay, when the pages which now record them are turned to dust, and when every letter, binding, cover, all, are lost in the mausoleums of the viewless winds, the ages then will do my "Wildfires" justice, know and call them by their proper names, — a club of "teaching spirits," — luring no more, but lighting on man's way to that untrodden bourn in which they're shining — the warning and the beacon. But patience, Wildfires! "This will be when thought is free," when truth ceases to be ground down to the standard of ignorance, when *calf* binding and *sheep-skin* covers cease to be the only measures of knowledge, and the only garments in which science deigns to array herself; when printer's ink is washed by the perpetual flow of the waters of inspiration, then, and not till then, will this little club of life pictures be truly known, and the epithet of "the Wildfires" perish with the things that are not.

READERS, — few or many, — these are REAL LIFE pictures — deem them what you may — "torn leaves" from just such life histories as your own. Some, indeed, are shadows from *beyond the veil;* some, echoes from the unknown shore — but echoes only — repeating words which every heart has syllabled, and will again: *and what they are yourselves will all be soon.*

CRITICS — men of pen, and ink, and power, a power more vast than ever sword could wield — praise, blame, or sneer, just as your will dictates, provided always you write or speak, cut or build up, as *honest* thought, not custom, popular belief, or slavish service, bids ye.

Each man's true thought I honor, his praise I covet; for I would not insult the world by offering it a book I deemed too bad for praise. His blame I'm prepared to meet and merit; for am I perfect? and should I fear the rod that lessons me to wisdom?

His sneer alone falls harmless, for honest effort was never yet crushed down by unreasoning shrugs, nor candid truth by sneering, minus logic. And so, most mighty press, whilst I should thank you warmly for your very best, I shall not cringe beneath your very worst.

The "Wildfires" burn or light just as you use them; and one of that Club now signs herself

Your servant,

EMMA HARDINGE.

8 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK,
January 31, 1861.

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THE WILDFIRE CLUB.

THE PRINCESS.

A VISION OF ROYALTY IN THE SPHERES.

AMERICA is rich in its spirit mediums, lecturers, writers, commentators, public and private circles for spirit investigation — every facility, in short, exists for ingrafting what is termed the "spiritual element" upon the materiality of the physical life. In lieu of these aids, however, to a knowledge of the interior worlds around us, Europe is full of her haunted houses, her fairy groves, and magic lakes; her forests and vales, tenanted by the fantasies of the demon world. There is hardly an old castle, or time-honored pile of brick and mortar, which is not replete with its legends of supernaturalism. Every ancient house has its array of visionary inhabitants, and every distinguished family its attendant sprite.

Following up the law of cause and effect in this world of traditionary lore, we might find some curiosities in spiritual philosophy of which our European neighbors little dream, underlying this vast stratum of superstitious absurdity; but there are, occasionally, isolated cases which bear

the test of scrutiny, and present, upon investigation, sufficient corroborative evidence of spirit communion, to justify our belief in the tangibility of certain appearances, in contradistinction to mere fables of like character. Such is the one which I am about to present. The circumstances are well known in the circles where they transpired, but they have never obtained sufficient credit to justify their narration to the world, except as mere hearsay; in fact, they are too intimately connected with persons now living to render their publication, in a direct form, agreeable.

In the suburbs of the great modern Babylon, London, there is a large and splendid old mansion, whose every stone teems with historical associations. It has a vast grass-grown court in front; a grove of splendid old forest trees adorning its park in the rear; there are noble terraces, with ancient urns, old-fashioned sun-dial, mouldering statues of dead kings and emperors — in short, every attribute of the mediæval splendor which distinguished the abodes of royalty in the middle centuries. There are memories in every stone of this now mouldering pile. The diamond panes are each consecrated to some fugitive monarch, who was there concealed, or escaped through its narrow casement; or recall some fable of midnight spectral form, belted knight, or beruffed dame, who, with ghostly tread and flickering lamp, glances athwart the deserted windows at the lone, small hours of night in that abode of dim, by-gone memories.

At the time when I visited this place, it was in possession of the widow of a Presbyterian clergyman — a lady of austere manners and reserved life; and it is a passage in her history which I am about to relate. Her predecessor in this house was the celebrated Princess A., a scion

of a noble English family, who had married into the royalty of another country. This princess had been long famous for her beauty, no less than infamous for her gallantries. At a very old age, this disgraceful representative of a large class among the aristocratic circles of Europe was celebrated for the perpetration of intrigues which would have stained any period of life, but which attached treble infamy on an advanced and notorious old age. With the exception of this dark stain, the princess bore a character for large benevolence and kindliness of heart; and though the more refined and delicate sentiments of her own class were in disgusting repulsion to her infamous celebrity, she still maintained a large circle of toadying dependants, and even fashionable notorieties, around her. At the age of *ninety* years, this miserable, painted specimen of a worn-out but still vain coquette used to boast of the conquests which the sight of her still beautiful arm would make upon casual passengers, to whom she was accustomed to display its fair proportions, when seated in a balcony studiously arranged for the purpose.

It was about this time that, finding the inevitable hand of death tugging at her world-loving heartstrings, she sent into the north for a young lady who had lately become an orphan, and whom, being a near relative of and very much beloved by the princess, she determined to adopt as her heiress. This young lady had been educated in strict seclusion. At an early age she had been betrothed to a nobleman, to whom she was deeply attached; and until the time when the princess sent for her to become a member of her household, the world and its ways were entirely unknown to her. During her residence with the princess, she learned, for the first time, the nature of the disgraceful reputation which was attached to her protectress. She also

heard with dismay, but entire incredulity, that Lord L., her intended husband, was among the list of notorious *roués*, whose name was most intimately associated with the infamous princess.

To the pure all things are pure. Geraldine, in her own unconsciousness of vice, deemed its existence in those she loved a mere slander, and pertinaciously refused to accord her belief to any of the innumerable tales of infamy which every where met her, in reference to both her protectress and her lover.

Finally she became compelled to doubt, even though she would not believe, and it was in a state of mind bordering upon anxious uncertainty, if not entire distrust, that the hour for the departure of the princess to her long account came at length, leaving the young orphan, Geraldine, the heiress to her wealth, and the sole possessor of the above-named old house, with its long list of traditions and visionary histories.

At the death of the princess, Lord L. urged his suit for the hand of the fair heiress with a pertinacity which she could scarcely resist. She loved her betrothed most fondly, but the distrust of his character, which had grown up in her mind since her residence in town had made her acquainted with the more than doubtful reputation which he bore, perpetually influenced her to defer her intended union. A vague feeling, for which she could scarcely account, seemed forever suppressing the assent which would rise in her heart at his earnest solicitations for their immediate union, ere the words could reach her lips. In after life she was accustomed to say she always thought *yes;* but a power stronger — it almost seemed *independent* of herself — would compel her to say *no!*

One evening, or rather one night, she had parted with

her lover at a late hour, after faithfully promising that the next day should decide the long-deferred question of their wedding day. An unusual weight hung upon her spirits. She seemed anxious to detain her lover, yet, ashamed of the undefined feeling of terror for which her strong sense could not account, she refused to yield to the suggestions of her unconquerable desire to recall him to her presence. Hoping to dissipate her unaccountable restlessness by change of scene, she caused a bright fire to be lighted up in what was once the state apartment of the mansion, and here, after all the domestics had retired to rest, she seated herself, endeavoring to create an artificial desire for repose by fatiguing herself with study.

Geraldine had been seated among her books and papers for some two hours, when the distant tolling of the huge hall clock reminded her that the hour then sounding (one) was that of the departure of her deceased protectress. From that moment, all her efforts to concentrate her mind on her studies were in vain. The sole idea that *would* possess her fancy was, What was the condition of the soul of the dead princess? Did she then live? Was she in a conscious state of existence? and, if so, what might it be?

The princess, with the same anomalous condition of mind which invariably sends the week-day sinner to church with the most punctual regularity, and chants the loudest responses from the lips of the grossest immorality, always retained in her family a domestic chaplain; and the gentleman who had officiated in this capacity during her lifetime still remained in the house, awaiting another appointment. He was a man of austere manners and appearance. Geraldine had never held communion with him, because an innate feeling of repulsion seemed to divide them; but now she remembered his presence in the house, and a feel-

ing of relief stole upon her as she determined, despite the lateness of the hour, to send for and discuss with him the question which deeply agitated her mind. Taking a night lamp in her hand, she proceeded to find the chamber occupied by one of her maids, and having succeeded in arousing her, she desired her to dress herself quickly, wake up the priest, and bid him attend her in the room she had lately quitted.

To this room Geraldine now returned, and on entering it was amazed at the glare of light which met her view. It was a vast and spacious apartment, hung on all sides with splendid tapestry, and lighted upon state occasions with twelve brilliant chandeliers, which hung at regular intervals around the walls. She had caused some wax lights to be placed on a table, near the huge, open fireplace, and these, as far as she could remember, were the only lights she had left; these, too, she knew, only shed an imperfect lustre into the far recesses of the vast chamber; but now, to her utter amazement, every sparkling girandole blazed with light. The whole room was dazzlingly illuminated; and although the astonished lady knew that every domestic but her lately aroused attendant was fast slumbering, and that, too, in a distant part of the house, she began speculating as to who could have lit up these many dazzling lamps, and in so short a space of time. Even in the midst of her wonderment, she felt an irresistible impulse to traverse the room; and, ascending the steps of the "dais," which occupied its farthest end, she seated herself, she knew not why, beneath the velvet canopy which, in old times, had been appropriated to royal guests.

No sooner had she done so than she felt some one pressing closely to her side. Faint and almost dead with terror, she sunk back in her seat, closing her eyes as she did

so, either from irresistible impulse or the weakness of fear. The next instant the well-known voice of the princess sounded in her ears, saying, —

"Geraldine, be not afraid: it is I."

Unable to answer, but entirely conscious of the appalling presence of the dead, the terrified girl yet had presence of mind enough to remember, and reiterate mentally, her burning desire to understand the condition of her departed friend. It seemed as if her voiceless question was fully understood, for again the familiar voice spoke to her: —

"I am neither in heaven nor hell, Geraldine; but in the place called the spheres."

A pause.

"*I thought a question*," the lady was accustomed to say, "and again the answer came, —

"'The spheres are conditions of being, which we ourselves create in our earth-life. *I made my sphere* — judge of its nature by the appearance of its inhabitants.'

"At the last words, I felt compelled," adds the narratress of this scene, "to unclose my eyes. I sat upright and looked around me; but I rubbed my eyes, and turned again and again in my seat, rising up and sitting down. I could not convince myself that I was actually awake, although I *knew* I was not asleep. The room was crowded with lords and ladies, knights, kings, queens, and princes. Some wore diadems and royal robes, and others merely the adornments of high rank and place. They were, as it seemed, performing a slow and solemn measure, and though I heard no music, I felt that it was being played, and that the visionary dancers kept time to its beat. But the strangest portions of the scene consisted, first, in the fact that nearly every high and noble knight or dame had, for partner, some man or woman whose appearance betokened

them to have sprung from the very lowest, poorest, and most degraded ranks of life; and that every face, although I clearly distinguished them to have *once been human*, bore the lineaments of some disgusting *animal*.

"In an instant, as by intuitive perception, I could read the entire history of the people around me, in these revolting traits of animal life. They had cultivated animal passions in their human nature, and, O, miserable result! their disembodied spirits presented the horrible stamp of their perverted natures, engraved tangibly on their spirit-forms. I beheld, too, with lightning instinct, that while each sought, as a necessity, the companionship of the other, they loathed each other's appearance, and were engaged in exchanging taunts and revilings at the folly and vice which had thus disfigured them.

"As I gazed on, understandingly, but in deep awe, a conviction of retributive justice possessed my soul, and I seemed able to read these people's very lives, in the *sphere* which they had made for themselves after death; but they were phantoms. I sometimes question, real and individualized as they appeared to me, whether I actually saw, or only fancied I saw, them; for, in a space of time less than it takes me to detail the fact, they all melted into thin air, and I was again alone — no, not alone! — God of mercy! what form did I then behold, hobbling up to my seat, as it were, out of the very vacancy which had lately been filled with the visionary waltzers! The Princess A. approached me, even as she used to look when arrayed for her hideous conquests — a disgusting caricature of old age in fashionable life. And yet a change, *such a change*, was there! Those features, which had ever beamed in kindness upon me, I felt, I *knew*, them to belong to her shape, and yet they, too, no longer wore the *human stamp!* I looked, *curi-*

ously, again and again; wonder, and not fear, was the paramount feeling of my mind; for, as sure as I had eyes to see, and a mind to receive the impression of those eyes, I beheld the Princess A. changed, or stamped, or engraved, in some way that I can never make another comprehend, with all the characteristics of a most loathsome and disgusting animal. I saw her life, her most degrading life, in this. I saw her every past action, in all its animal monstrosity. I knew it was one and the same thing. The animal *mind* was now the animal *form*, and yet the divine principle of the soul remaining. I also saw grief, shame, regret, remorse, — and, withal, miserable longing for the past enjoyments of her miserable career. O that memory could cease forever, if its death in my mind were but to close all recollection of this loathsome but piteous apparition! I wept; I am now conscious, even at this distant hour, that I did weep in agonizing sympathy over this self-degraded being; and I fancy that the wretched creator of her own *sphere* wept too. Her voice was softer, and I fancied her form less repulsive, as I heard her say, —

"'I am not in heaven, nor in hell, Geraldine; *only in the spheres!* I have made my own sphere; it is that of the sensualist, a spirit-home for human souls with animal propensities. Every vice has its sphere, Geraldine; lust, avarice, passion, pride, murder. The *hypocrite is in them all!* All sinners are hypocrites! They do not dread to commit vice; they only fear to have it known. O, could they but appear on earth as they do in the spheres, they would not dare to make themselves the loathsome things they must become! On earth, Geraldine, you look upon mankind as they appear; in the spheres, *as they are;* and *as* they are, so is their heaven or hell. Did ye mark that monstrous brutish thing that led the "*brawls*" yonder? —

dancing with a woman more abject, low, and vile than the gutters of your most degraded cities could send forth. That monstrous image once wore a *royal crown*, and bore the sceptre of England's virtuous realm.'

"'O that I could awake from this dreadful dream!' I cried; 'this is too horrible! Let me awake! O, let me awake!'

"'Thou art *not dreaming*, my child,' answered the sad voice; 'and to prove to thee the truth of this most momentous hour, know that by this time to-morrow night, a fresh partner will lead out the Princess A. in her midnight "*brawl*." You know him as a man, Geraldine; behold him now as a spirit!'

"What next followed I have no power to describe. It seemed to me that I saw Lord L. hastily traversing the space before me; another was with him, whom I could not see. It was a man; but his back was towards me; and — they were fighting! I heard the clash of swords! I saw hasty passes, and another moment, I beheld him — the beloved of my heart — stretched out on the ground a lifeless corpse! There was a deep and fearful gash on his face, and the blood seemed to flow from the wound in a deluge. I would have shrieked aloud, for the whole scene no longer bore the shadowy impress of a dream, but seemed to be an actual, tangible reality before me; but the cry I would have uttered died upon my lips. The body passed away from my sight, and in its place stood the unhappy princess, leading out my lover to the ghostly dance! I did not see his face, but I *felt* its import, and I knew that a fresh hypocrite had been stripped of his mask, and a new human soul with an animal spirit had been added to the sphere of the sensualist.

"At this moment, another voice struck upon my ear.

It was that of Mr. R., the princess's chaplain, exclaiming, 'My dear madam, what has happened, that you summon me at this late hour? and why do I see this room illuminated as for a festival?'

"I started up — the figures were gone, but the *lights remained!* Who had lighted them I knew not. All the dreadful past was stamped upon my mind with horrible distinctness. I repeated it to Mr. R., calmly, deliberately, consecutively. He listened to my story with equal calmness; he never uttered one word of doubt as to its veracity or reality. He has told me since that he *could not do so; for he believed every syllable I uttered.* Our conversation lasted far into the hours of morning, and it determined mainly the next day's action.

"With the earliest possible hour I sent for Lord L. I offered him my hand on two conditions: the first was, that he should accept it *instantly;* the second, that immediately after the ceremony he should depart with me for the Continent, and never leave my side for three whole days.

"Lord L. did become my husband, within one hour after I had sent for him.

"The world was scandalized, and busied itself enough with our hasty and 'suspicious' union. I heeded none of these things. They never could know my incentives to this hasty proceeding, — vain, alas! as it was inconsiderate.

"My husband would *not* comply with my *second* condition. Prayers, entreaties, tears, and even menaces, uttered in my deep agony at his anticipated fate, were all fruitless. 'To-morrow,' he repeated, 'would be soon enough.' What fatality hung, like a leaden weight, on my lips, preventing me from disclosing to him the circumstances of my fearful vision, I know not. I could not speak of it to him, but

only joined my entreaties with those of our chaplain, that he would not attempt to quit my side. To this 'flattering request,' as he termed it, he yielded so ready an acquiescence, that I was completely thrown off my guard; and when, at length, I parted with him to dress for dinner, I had dissipated the gloomy fancies of the past night of horrors, and began to speculate, with something very like dismay, upon the precipitate act into which my frenzy of fear had hastened me. It was with only a dim perception that I was indeed Lord L.'s wife, that I quitted my dressing room, about half past seven, and hastened to join my newly-made bridegroom in the saloon.

"He was not there! The chaplain was standing in the balcony alone. Where was my lord, I inquired. A valet handed me a sealed letter; it was *his handwriting!* To this day I have no memory of the action by which I broke the seal, and perused these words: —

"'Dearest Geraldine: An engagement of deep importance and paramount necessity will detain me from your side for one hour. I could not speak of it earlier, because it might have robbed me of the joy of calling you my wife; but even in this unlooked-for happiness, the call of duty and honor must be obeyed.'

"Of the hours that followed I have no distinct perception. Our friend, the chaplain, with more composure than I, in my utter wretchedness, retained, sent out spies in all directions to trace, and if possible to arrest, what we both felt assured was intended, — namely, a duel. These efforts were at length successful — successful in so far as tracing the evidence that a duel *had been fought* — for there, with his cold, dead face upturned to the silent stars, in a remote corner of my own park, lay the lifeless form of my late husband!

"That night, *at one o'clock*, I sat by his cold corpse, pondering on the fearful revelation of the preceding night; the fatally fulfilled prediction, and the possible condition of the spirit of the duellist, killed by the husband of a woman whom he had seduced."

The above details were furnished from the lips of the heroine of the strange history. Her singular fortunes had often been the subject of public comment; her hasty marriage with one of the most notorious *roués* of the day; his awful death, on the very night of his wedding, — that death coming from the hands of his most familiar friend, whose wife he had basely betrayed, — the whole eventful story, crowned by the noble widow's subsequent union with a humble clergyman, who resided in her family as chaplain, all contributed to render her, for many years, an object of public curiosity, interest, and scandal. When I saw her, now four or five years ago, she was a very old woman, leading a solitary and austere life, in her gloomy mansion of evil and supernatural report, from which, it seems, she had never strayed during the course of her long life.

She told me that her existence, strange and solitary as it appeared, had been entirely colored by a vision, occurring to her in very early life. She expressed her entire belief in the possibility of the return and appearance of departed souls, and in a moment of confidential intimacy, assured me that she held frequent and salutary intercourse with the spirits of the dead. But it was from the lips of a domestic, who had for many years enjoyed her undivided confidence, that I learned the above details of her mistress's singular and unaccountable theory upon the condition of humanity in the life beyond the grave.

THE MONOMANIAC,

OR THE SPIRIT BRIDE.*

CHAPTER I.

WERE an entire stranger of the English character to journey through the land of Great Britain, with a view of determining the leading characteristic of the nation, he would say, "Assuredly the English are more than half of them monomaniacs." Not that this peculiar phase of madness would strike the observer as being so apparent, but the opinion would be the necessary inference from the assurances of the people themselves.

The moment any individual assumes to himself the right to indulge in a train of thought on any particular subject opposed to the educational traditions of his ancestors, lo! he is at once pronounced a "monomaniac." Should individuality of opinion ramify into more than one channel of difference from his fellows, then he is an unqualified maniac, and only needs the possession of wealth, or the heirship to a title, to justify his instant incarceration in a lunatic asylum.

I remember a very striking instance of this popular rendering of a peculiar opinion into "monomania," in the person of an old sailor, with whom I once enjoyed a highly-cherished acquaintance, and from whose lips I

* A sketch from real life, originally written for "The Spiritual Age."

derived the particulars of a history whose marked peculiarity has left an indelible stamp on my mind. There is a torch blazing in my lonely attic, lighting up every remote corner with its supernal illumination, which casts a glorious vision of light upon the dark spots of memory, enlightening the mysteries of the past, with its clear spirit-beams, in brighter radiance than the midday sun. The vapors of prejudice and superstition melt before its genial warmth, the haze of educational fallacy and conservative ignorance fade away in its living light, gilding the wondrous "*hallucination*" which cast a deep and injurious stigma on the old sailor's life, and converting it into a beam of glory from the beautiful dream-land, in which his long-protracted and weary voyage of life is now safely terminated. He was a very well known character, this same old Tom Martin, — highly respected, ever looked up to as one who had led a perfectly sinless life, as one whose opinions and attainments were wonderfully in advance of his station, and at direct variance with any known means which had ever befallen him of acquiring information.

Old Tom Martin was regarded as a mere problem, when his worth, ability, and singular history were considered, in connection with his humble station and total absence of all the refining processes of education and good society. He acted like a true Christian, spoke like a gentleman, reasoned like a lawyer, preached like a divine, and practised like a good layman. And yet Tom Martin was a "monomaniac" — clearly, unmistakably mad upon *one* topic; and so the quidnuncs would say the chances were, that to this same madness was mainly attributable his extraordinary lucidity on other points. I never happened to arrive at the mode of reason from which they drew this

inference; but as I entirely agree with them as to the effect, we will not too closely investigate the premises. The subject of this monomaniac will also be the subject of my little sketch, the actual details of which are as fresh in my memory as when the venerable narrator, in his clean, tidy blue shirt and neatly-patched old jacket, with his long silver curls, so pure and holy, falling on his ancient shoulders, and the mild, dark eyes looking away, away into that distance of which mind alone is the horizon, used to sit beneath the wide-spreading shadow of a huge oak, and relate to me the visionary history of his singular life.

Ever and anon the patriarchal sailor would raise his old tarpauling hat in courteous salutation to a comrade or passing acquaintance; and I never yet saw the greeting exchanged without far deeper respect on the part of the passenger towards the "monomaniac" than could be in any way elicited by the appearance of so meek but humble a figure, without an internal and involuntary impulse excited by some far more intense sympathy than mere externals could have called forth. Sometimes the old man would produce a little blue cotton handkerchief, in which his slender store of provisions — bread and cheese, with sometimes the luxury of a sausage — would be carried out on a fine day, to dine in state by the side of a clear running brook. Those who have shared these humble meals with poor Tom have enjoyed a luxury which monarchs might envy. And there are many such; for the generous creature always managed (God alone knows how, for he was very poor) to have a little surplus, either to share with a friend or bestow on some one poorer than himself.

Tom was born at the seafaring town of Portsmouth.

He was one of a large family who had all entered upon the surging waters of the mighty ocean as their natural inheritance. He was the youngest of many sons, each and all of whom had passed away on the stormy game of life ere this child, sickly and incapacitated for exertion by an inherent tendency to rheumatism, had reached his twelfth year. Then it was that his parents, — as hard and ruthless as the wild seas in which their own rough destinies had been cast, — becoming weary of the feeble little invalid, positively determined that, ill or well, the "lazy little brat" should go to sea and do something for his living. They had much difficulty to get so helpless a being shipped off, in any capacity. He was so small, and pale, and hungry-looking a child, that huge shipmasters regarded him as a little speck of life whom it would be their inevitable lot to crush out of existence by the mere contact of their strong, rough, tarry hands. Being war time, however, when hands were very scarce, they at last succeeded in getting the skipper of a doubtful-looking craft to enter the urchin upon his "caboose" list. His miserable appearance, however, as he sat on his old chest, when the captain came aboard for the purpose of setting sail on his first voyage, caused his employer sad misgivings.

Poor Tom was often accustomed to say, he drew the augury of his future life from his captain's first greeting, which was in these ominous words: "My eyes! what a shrimp! I don't see no good chance of getting any part about him to punish."

If this worthy speculator was balked in this laudable effort, however, it was not for want of trying, for the lad was punished for every thing — punished for what he did do, and punished for what he didn't do — beaten, and

cuffed, and abused, and sworn at; and yet he neither died nor regretted his lot. He never wished himself at home, nor desired to be any where else than in the midst of his present misery. Perhaps he had no other conception of life at all, for he had never known kindness or sympathy. In his home he had been only treated as a useless burden; and among his stout sailor brothers he had beheld evidences of a life of strength and an existence of strange enjoyment of which this poor, neglected little sufferer had no actual conception; and so it happened that this state being not positively worse than any other he had ever known, he was no more wretched than he deemed it was his certain lot to be.

For some four or five years he led a life of a similar nature, the mere drudge of hard-lived "sea sharks," who found a position in the dreadful times of war, which seemed to drag into being the rudest and most savage qualities of the reckless men who were the agents of these necessitous times; and still poor Tom lived on, patiently, hopelessly, a weary life, without end, aim, or ambition. He had improved considerably in physical strength, despite the systematic efforts of cord and lash, kicks and starvation, to crush him out of life altogether; and at the age of eighteen, he formed a friendship which laid the foundation of the first era in that life, when his soul seemed to awake from its night, and to claim equal immunities in his existence with his body. In the ship whereon he was then serving was an old man who had seen much service, and whom the sailors, for his extreme piety and exemplary language, had nicknamed "Parson Jack." This poor soul at one time fell ill; and as they were cruising on a desperate mission, and under a hard, rough privateer captain, the sufferer expected no other treatment than

permission to roll himself up in his hammock, and when it was found that he actually could do no more work, quietly to linger there until he died.

"If they don't pitch me overboard, as lumber, afore the last gasp comes," he would mutter, "it will be a *marcy* indeed, and more than suffin oncommon."

But there was a greater mercy than this intended him, which poor old Jack found still more uncommon. This was the fact that a young, tender, and sympathizing nurse was by his bedside, his rough, thin hands full of little delicacies which he had stolen for the purpose and hid about the ship, and his low, gentle tones breathing comfort into the sufferer's ear during the long, weary watches of the night.

Sometimes Tom could steal nothing to feed his invalid charge with; and then he would come with his own mess of rough ship beef, cut up small to tempt the sick man's appetite, and the hard, stale biscuit of his own untasted portion, sopped in cold water, as the only delicacy which the poor watcher could procure. Hour after hour the drudge would sit, when his own heavy eyes were smarting and sore for want of rest, spelling out the leaves of a very tattered Bible, which old Jack had carried about with him all his life, in memory of "the blessed mother" who had started him off with that and a sea chest, as his only inheritance; and now, when he knew he was for "casting anchor in the same road of eternity to which she had long since shipped before him," this precious legacy seemed, as he said, "to smooth out the rough way before him, and give him his true sailing orders for the port of heaven."

It was late one night when the ragged, tired boy had stolen down, after a hard day's work, not to sleep, but to

beguile his dying charge of the death-fever that was consuming him, by spelling out a chapter of the good book, that he found two sailors standing over the old tar's hammock, insisting upon it that he should instantly vacate it, as they expected a brush with the enemy, and the skipper wanted all the hammocks, *and this one especially*, to heap up round the bulwarks of the ship. The old man, with the irritability of fever, was feebly uttering a remonstrance against being deprived of his death bed, and one of the men had already cut the rope which should eject the poor tenant, when his cruel proceeding was arrested, for a moment, by the unexpected but urgent remonstrance of Tom. With a brutal oath, the man struck the young sailor from his path, and, hurling the disputed hammock from the dying man, added to his brutality a savage kick at the "useless old hulk" which lay in his way. The next moment he lay insensible by the sick man's side, felled by a blow from the weak boy's hand, and only removed, stunned and bleeding, by his companion from the spot.

To re-sling the hammock, and replace the sufferer in his bed, was the work of the next few moments; and when that was completed, he found himself a prisoner, removed to the deck, sentenced to the tender mercies of the boatswain and cat-o'-nine-tails; and finally, with bleeding back, bleeding heart, and crushed spirit, doomed to an ignominious exposure in irons as a malignant mutineer.

It was a calm, breathless, moonlight night. The expected encounter with the enemy had not come off, and all on board the ship were at rest, except the necessary watchers of her safety. Not a breath of air stirred the sails, or fanned the burning cheek of the unhappy prisoner, as he sat in dogged silence at the rail to which he was chained, alone, desperate, and desolate. By an impulse for which

he could not account, he raised his eyes to the splendid canopy of heaven, bespangled with its myriad fires, and radiant in deathless beauty. For a moment a calmer instinct passed over his mind; and as he continued to gaze, he thought involuntarily, "I wonder if poor old Jack is dead yet; and if so, if he is *up there — aloft?* What sort of a place can it be? Heaven — O, what is heaven? They say it is *rest* and *happiness.* Ah me! I wonder if poor sailors get in there! — and what kind of a berth old Jack will have? As to me, I shall never get there — sartain; cause why? all along of the parsons, who say the way is so hard that *I* could never find it. O Jack! Jack! why did you leave me alone? why did you not carry me with you? Sure you know'd the way to heaven, and mought have taken a poor, friendless lad along with ye!" Then, after a pause, he added, "That's it — that's it! When they take these irons off me, I will jump into the sea. Then I shall die quick, and perhaps Jack may not be so far gone yet but that he may heave me up, and help me into that good port to which it is so mortal sure he is bound."

Just then a sweet, soft, unusual air seemed to spring up — not around or away from him, but just upon his cheek; it seemed, as he often described it, "like as if a bird, with sweetly perfumed wings, were gently fanning him, or as if fragrant flowers were waved in his face." There was a sound, too — one to which he used to say all description was inadequate. It was most like a long chord of music, containing an infinite variety of harmonies, but all of a ringing, glassy sound, struck in the air, but so far off — O, so far — that, although seeming plain to him, it must be an echo from thousands of leagues away in space, and ever *from above!*

He used to hear this sound repeatedly, up to the latest day of his life, in fact; but it never varied, nor ever permitted him to define it in any other way than in the confused words as above given.

What followed, he often used to say, was indeed the moment "when his soul was born." He knew he had lived before; but it was only as a *body;* his *spirit* was born on that memorable night — in that hour of bitter agony and loneliness. He heard distinctly the chord of music I have mentioned sounding in the air, and then came a sweet, low, female voice, saying, "Tom — dear Tom!"

Had the voice shouted "Tom!" to the day of judgment, he declared he would never have believed it aught but fancy, unless he had seen the speaker; but that one word, "*dear*" — the first time he had ever heard the epithet coupled with *his* name in his life — assured him some one *did* speak to him, and some one, too, whom he had never before met with.

He tried to answer the voice, but astonishment enchained his speech. Again were the words heard: —

"Tom, *dear* Tom! do not speak; I can read your thoughts." After a pause, the voice added, "Jack is dead to earth, and born in heaven."

In an instant, a sudden brightening of the air — a lightness such as he had never felt before — a choking sensation of joy and gladness, and his late comrade, the old dying sailor, stood beside him.

This was no ghost — of that Tom felt quite sure; for old Jack was there, laughing and hearty, and jollier than he had ever beheld him in his life; dressed all in his best, too, with a fine bandanna handkerchief in his breast pocket, sticking out as he used to have of a Sunday, and

his "man-o'-war's-man's hat" stuck jantily at the back of his head, with a fine, long ribbon streaming!

Now, glad as Tom felt to see his old comrade in such good case, after he had parted with him two hours before in the miserable plight above described, Tom was a little sore at being, what he called, thus "rigged." He never doubted for an instant that he saw his jovial comrade before him in strong life, and he was about to taunt him pleasantly for the cheat he had put upon him, when, to his utter amazement, he saw the figure before him gradually rise from the deck, float upward over the bulwarks, and actually pass away from sight, smiling and waving his hand to his aghast companion.

Before the young man's bewildered senses could even take cognizance of what he had seen, the sweet, feminine voice again sounded: —

"Tom, dear Tom, old Jack is dead. I am going to guard him up to heaven."

"My God! who speaks?" at length stammered the sailor.

"Your guardian angel and *spirit bride*," was again softly whispered.

"You doubt me; but we shall meet again; and till then I leave you a token of remembrance. Tell the captain that the 'San Carlos' will be upon him this morning at five o'clock, and that a leak is sprung beneath his own cabin lamp."

All was silence, nay, more, darkness — to the astonished sailor; for, with the cessation of the voice, the light of his own life seemed to be suddenly eclipsed.

Hours of dreamy reverie succeeded — wonder, not fear — a joy unknown before — a vision of life such as he had never, even faintly, conceived to exist; but all merging

into the intense longing, not for an explanation of, but a return of, the voice.

It was not until what he conceived must be about four o'clock in the morning that a footstep passing by aroused him from his self-communings. By an instinct, of which he had never before imagined himself possessed, he felt sure it was the captain. His newly-developed intuitions gave him strength as well as perception, and he called aloud, —

"Captain, I've something most particular to say to ye, sir."

A deep oath followed, and the surly brute raised his cane to chastise the audacious prisoner who thus dared to address him. But the young sailor earnestly added, —

"Don't strike me, sir, but for God's sake heed what I say. The San Carlos will be down upon you at five o'clock, and to prove my words, just examine your own cabin, and in that very place which is under your cabin lamp you will find the ship has sprung a leak!"

At the moment when his bold prisoner made these statements, the captain, by calculations which he deemed unmistakable, believed his much dreaded enemy — the San Carlos — to be at least four and twenty hours' sail to leeward; and as he knew that the poor ship-boy never could, by any possibility, have had access to his cabin, so he felt certain that he was listening to the ravings of insanity, and ordered the men, who had just then brought up the mortal remains of poor old Jack for interment in the pathless cemetery of ocean, to release the "raving lubber," and give him some stuff for a fever.

One hour later, in the dim haze of a misty dawn, the huge proportions of the famed Spanish privateer, the San Carlos, bore down upon the fated ship; while the distracted

master, completely unprepared for this visitation, but with a dim perception of a still greater calamity yet in store, ordered some spare hands to try the pumps, with a view of ascertaining whether the second part of the mysterious prophecy had, in reality, as terrible a foundation in truth as the first.

The report which he received was appalling. The ship not only leaked, but was in imminent danger of foundering.

"To my cabin — beneath the lamp! Search! search! search!" cried the distracted skipper.

But all was in vain. The leak was discovered to have originated in the very locality described; but the knowledge came too late.

"One hour earlier would have saved us!" cried the sailing master. "O, why was this secret kept back so long?"

Between the thunder of the enemy's guns, the roar of the booming ocean, now rising in the wild majesty of a terrific storm, the groans of the dying, and the incessant clatter of the now useless pumps, — in the very fever and crash of death, destruction, and despair, — the young sailor, toiling amid blood and carnage, was recalled from the hideous fever of life around him, to the better sphere of life eternal, by the low but thrilling, long, long chord of far-off celestial harmony, while the sweet, viewless voice, close to his very ear, made itself heard above the din and warfare, murmuring, —

"Be of good cheer: thou art safe! Thy spirit bride is here!"

Chapter II.

Alone on the wide waste of waters — utterly, hopelessly alone! Alone on the vast immensity, the boundless, trackless, unknown region of the fathomless deep! The storm of war was over — the din, the carnage, the ghastly strife of death! For the first time in his life Tom Martin had seen human beings writhing, twisting, and twining around each other in the hideous aim to kill — man to man, struggling which could tear the life from the other! Fellow-men, who would have met in the rough journey of the world's highway, and cheerfully shared their last crust of bread to serve each other, now, under the awful stimulus of rage, and at the mere bidding of two despots who coveted each other's lands, broke their Maker's image with the ruthless ferocity of wild beasts, and called it "*glory*" — shattered the glorious tabernacle of life which warrior, nor king, nor priest, nor layman could ever again build up, and deemed themselves "*patriots*." But now, all was over. The last boom of the mighty cannon had sounded the death-knell of brave young hearts, and the curling smoke had cleared away to reveal the ghastly faces of the dying and the dead, all and each enclosed in one common coffin — the shattered but sinking ship! slowly but surely in the boiling surge's trough! and now she sinks — lower, lower — yet lower — and now, a mighty shriek! the wild outcry of a hundred appalled, agonizing hearts — arms tossed aloft in the moaning air — wild, starting eyes streaming upwards to the receding world of life above — a hollow plunge, and the tossing whirlpool of water torn and rent by the agony of the dying, struggling mass be-

neath, closes over them forever! One, alone, remains! A mass of floating spars, hastily lashed together — none could say by whom — rests calmly on the unruffled surface of the ocean grave, while a heaving, almost lifeless human form struggles up instinctively, to repose on the unexpected haven of hope and safety. Not a sigh disturbs the deep silence of the death hour; not a wild bird sounds a requiem note over the sailors' grave; yet amid the deep hush of that awful moment, the one rescued being, now floating in security on the raft, still hears the ring of a sweet, low, human voice, —

"Courage, courage!" it whispers. "Thou art saved for better days and tranquil hours. In bright homes and sunny lands thou shalt yet speak with thy spirit bride of dangers past, and woful scenes, through which thy guardian angel's hand has steered thy bark in safety."

But hark! There are other voices in the air; and now, O God! what sight was that which met the sailor's palsied vision! Sailing upward through the gray, misty air, off to leeward of the spot where the doomed ship had disappeared, he plainly perceives arising wreath after wreath of thick, massy haze; first appearing above the white foam of the billows in faint, formless circles, then, as they ascend, resolving themselves into the human shapes of all his late companions. There they were — the old white-headed boatswain, with his whistle around his neck; the stern, fierce mate, with his ghastly head, seared with deep cuts; and sailor after sailor, each in his life-like form and human attributes — exact, unmistakable phantom images of the dead crew of his late entombed ship!

At first, the young sailor conceived that the horror of his dangerous position had evoked this tremendous spectral band from his own wild fancy; but as he gazed, erect-

ing himself on his raft, and fixedly, determinately questioning himself upon what he saw, he could no longer doubt its reality.

One after another they rose — the men, the boys, the fierce combatants, and, last of all, the savage skipper himself. He rose by the side of a fair young boy, a nephew of his own, and the only being for whom he had ever seemed to feel the kindling of human feeling. Often and often had Tom gazed admiringly on this gentle child, and many kindly little offices had been interchanged between them. The poor sailor-boy sometimes wished he were so fair and so fine, and so well off, that people might speak gently to him, and love him as they did Edward; but Edward, with a child's tender instinct, realized the desolate boy's feeling, and sought of him the little offices of good will which he needed of the crew; and now Tom beheld him — him, the cherished, beautiful idol of the terrible captain; him, whom neither love, nor power, nor grandness could save — floating upward in the dewy air, a lovely but transparent shadow; yet, O, how real, how very, very real did that passing shadow make the whole phantom band appear to the gazer!

On they passed, close by the raft on which he knelt, in slow and solemn march, yet seeming to be borne along by no volition or movement of their own. They turned neither to the right nor to the left; their course was evidently ascending, yet they moved in an angle which brought them almost in a sweeping circle ahead of his little raft. They spoke not, they stirred not. Their faces were pale, their eyes were fixed, their lips were closed, and their forms were utterly motionless. In vain he essayed to speak as the phantom band swept by him; his parched lips refused their office; his choking throat swelled to suffocation; but

when the stern captain came in sight, the agony of the beholder was redoubled, for there was his precious little Edward floating along by his side; and now, O Heaven! it is all real! then, there! there again! a slight stir in the faint breeze actually waves the long curls of golden threads which hang around the young child's brow; and now — he waves his hand! — his large, loving eyes are turned on the lonely lad, and once more the glance of affectionate sympathy wakes up in his heart the fine chords of human love. The breeze swells, the long curls now fairly dance and stream upon its wing; the boy passes away, waving his little hands and peering over his uncle's shoulder to smile, — ay, to *smile* upon his friend!

The spell is broken. Motion among that awful company of the dead is the very climax of the terrible vision.

"Edward, Edward! speak to me!" shrieks the agonized sailor, extending his arms, and then once more sinking into unconsciousness.

A happy oblivion for many moments shut out external objects from his view.

When Tom recovered to a perception of his situation, his first idea was the tremendous consciousness of being alone! — alone upon the mighty world of waters, whose depths had never echoed to the plummet line, whose paths nor man nor angel had ever marked out; and yet, as he repeated the terrible word "alone!" and wrung his hands in the depth of his despair, again the sweet, viewless whisperer sounded in his ear, —

"Courage, courage! Thou art not alone. I am here."

And he did have courage. He knew her not — this spirit bride. It might be an incarnation of some sweet western gale, or southern breeze; it might be the far-famed mermaid of whom legendary lore had so oft told

tales of wonder and mystery. He knew not, he cared not. Irresistibly the voice spoke to his heart; a *presence*, actual, tangible, though still viewless, was by his side; calmness stole over his spirit; hope was in his heart, and courage in his eye.

Almost unconsciously to himself he syllabled the words, "How long?" Whether he actually spoke, or merely thought, he never could determine; but, to his infinite rapture, he was instantly answered, in the following words: —

"Many hours of suffering must elapse ere rescue can reach thee, my beloved; but fear not; *I* will never leave thee!"

And many hours of suffering did elapse, and yet the poor waif on the mighty ocean did not fear; neither did he ever again feel himself alone. A burning, fervid day, and then a long, eternal, endless night followed, and still the sailor floated over the broad bosom of the ocean on his frail bark of chips.

Another long, scorching day before him, and still a vast, spotless waste of horizon, without a speck of hope or the faintest prospect of human aid; and yet the tender whisperer was there, and yet the sailor suffered and endured with strong courage and ever-tranquil joy; for he could no longer doubt that he *had a companion* — one who not only read his thoughts, but distinctly, lovingly, hopefully answered them. Sometimes he would actually forget his pain; hunger and thirst were no more, and his miserable raft seemed like a floating palace, for the sweet, precious voice told him of hours so bright and glorious, a destiny for man so new and magnificent, and a purpose in human suffering so wise, that her astounded auditor forgot the whole world in listening to her angelic revealments.

Then, again, she would seem to sport around him — now on this side, now on that; sometimes he distinctly felt the fanning of a soft breath on his burning brow, and the perfume of sweetest blossoms stealing over his senses.

"Where are you now, sweet south wind?" he would cry; and a touch — ay, *a palpable touch* — as of a tiny human hand, pressed down his eyelids, while a very, very distant chant, low, ineffably sweet, but distinctly *her* now familiar tone, sang these words: —

"Sleep, sleep! mariner, sleep!
The ocean is rocking thy cradle, so deep;
The angels around thee their vigils will keep,
While love shall thy senses in soft slumber steep.

"Rest, rest! child of earth, rest!
Repose on the foam of the billow's white crest;
Let the sweet peace of spirit-land dwell in thy breast,
And thy dreams be of home, in the realms of the blest.

"Peace, peace! deliverance is near!
Sleep, while thy spirit-love breathes in thine ear
Tales of bright promise and thoughts of bright cheer;
Sleep, mariner, sleep! — Beloved, I AM HERE."

How long the fairy visions of that sweet slumber lasted Tom never knew. When he did at length arouse, it was to find himself being dragged up the side of a noble ship, while kind, inquisitive faces gazed upon him; and though burning thirst tormented him, and agonizing pain quivered in every fibre of his exhausted frame, he mentally reëchoed the last whisper of his viewless companion, —

"Yes, love, safe at last!"

The safety which our poor, tempest-tost Tom Martin did at last experience, however, was of but a negative kind, for he found himself on board of an English man-of-war, bound

on desperate service, and commanded by one of the most notorious martinets in the British service.

O man, man! "dressed in a little brief authority," how small appears the kingdom of thy petty sway, yet what mighty consequence to human souls may not the use or abuse of that petty sway involve! More especially does this apply to the poor sailor. No captive chained to the wheel, and shrinking beneath the lash of a tyrant master, can be more hopelessly in the power of his fellow-man, than is the sailor in the floating prison of a harsh or unjust commander.

The imaginary divinity which hedges in a king extends its formidable mantle of power over all human authoritarians; and man cringes to the office even where he may despise, and would, individually, reject the man. Sea captains are monstrous instances of this potential bugbear of authority. A savage nature developing itself amid the rough scenes of war and strife on the stormy ocean waves, has been known to oppress, maltreat, and even destroy the lives of noble fellows, whose strength of mind and body would have sufficed, again and again, to crush the inhuman tyrant before whom he bowed, only because he was hedged in the magic circle of authority. The principle itself is not only wise, but absolutely, arbitrarily necessary, in a world of degrees; but it ought at least to impress upon man the enormous responsibility which he owes to that God who has intrusted him with the weal or woe of the helpless human souls who weave their woof of destiny within the dominion of his authority.

At the time of which we write, the high seas reeked with the sighs of white slaves, lashed, and torn, and crushed into sin and rebellion, beneath the iron rule of remorseless sea-kings. It may be better now; I know

not. But O, may kind, loving angels help the wretched sailor, who cowers beneath the yoke of a tyrant commander, alone on the world of waters, chained to his bitter life by the narrow planks which separate him from destruction.

Scarcely had our young mariner regained sufficient strength to crawl about the decks, after a long and painful attack of typhoid fever, than he was called upon to share in the hard, stern rule of one of the most bitter tyrants that ever went to his long account with the freight of thousands of human groans on his spirit.

Tom worked hard, and well, however, — cheerfully, too; for was not the precious *voice* ever by his side, whispering hope and encouragement, and educating, not alone his better nature, but his intellect and mind, by the intercourse of angel purity and wisdom?

A day came, at length, which tested these bright lessons most severely. The crew were all assembled on the quarter deck, ranged around in their several degrees, and Tom stood among them, the most degraded, broken-hearted, and miserable being of them all. And yet it was not for himself that he suffered: the assemblage of stern, sullen, downcast beings were there to witness the shameful punishment of the lash, and the subject was a poor, miserable, sickly lad, who had been convicted of the crime of stealing. The theft was one of the most aggravated kind: he had been found abstracting a piece of *white bread* from the captain's own larder, and the insulting plea that he was *hungry*, and the ship biscuit served out to the crew was disgustingly full of insects, only added to the atrocity of the offence, and incurred the addition of at least another dozen lashes.

Tom had never before witnessed a similar scene, but

he knew and loved the wretched culprit. He imbibed the strong magnetism of indignation, shame, and disgust which the silent crew all manifested; and, ere he was aware of the act he was committing, he stepped up to the captain, and, hat in hand, humbly, respectfully, but firmly, solicited to be permitted to receive the punishment in place of poor little Joe, because he — the said Joe — was sick and weakly, and the said Tom was strong and hearty, and better able to bear the flogging. The novelty, no less than the audacity, of this original request at first startled, but finally so delighted, the sea-monster to whom it was addressed, that he actually indulged "the lubber's fancy;" and the noble seaman was permitted to receive several dozen of savage stripes, which enabled him to retire with bleeding back, shattered frame, and a reputation which was dear to the memory of British sailors for many, many long years after.

But this was not all. No sooner had the gallant substitute tottered away from the ladder, than the word was given to tie up the unfortunate lad for whom he had hoped to have suffered, the grim captain declaring that if Tom loved thrashing, it was a pity he should not have it; but that was no reason the culprit should be spared, and therefore "*justice*" demanded, "the *play* being over, that the *punishment* should begin."

For one moment Tom stood with an axe in his hand, which he had hastily caught up. For one brief moment the tyrant's life hung by a thread, and Tom was, in intent, a murderer; the next, the axe fell powerless from his grasp, and he stood listening attentively, but sternly, to *the voice:* —

"Hold, Tom! what would you do? Can two wrongs make one right? What if you become a murderer?

Could your soul's perdition change the law which gives this man authority? Could your resistance change the system, or even save the lad? Look around you: other officers, equally cruel, equally powerful, are ready to step into *his* place, and execute *his* orders; and where would you be? — shipwrecked beyond *my* power to save you! Henceforth learn to act when you can *save*. Speak in the right of manhood when God and the Right demand; but never act unless you can do good, and never speak unless you have given yourself time to think. And now, Tom, — dear, dear Tom! — having had time to *think*, it is now time to *speak!*"

And speak Tom did, in the might of manhood and the name of God, and, with the spirit of his angel bride on his lips, he shouted aloud, "Hold, captain! You have done enough! The boy *shall not* be flogged!"

The next instant, as if by magic, the air rung to one tremendous shout, echoed from the swelling hearts of the outraged and indignant crew, and a terrible scene of mutiny raged throughout the ship. The officers were neither unaccustomed to, nor unprepared for, such scenes. Firm and composed they remained at their posts, and, by virtue of strong command, some persuasion, and some show of determined authority, the riot was soon quelled. Still, the unfortunate subject of the mutiny profited by it, for he was *not* flogged, although his generous defender was shortly after placed in irons to await his trial for life or death.

That trial never took place. By what means, was never ascertained, — whether by the connivance of the officers or the determination of the crew, — certain it was, that at midnight the captive's chains were unloosed, and he remained concealed in the ship for weeks, fed

and protected by his admiring comrades, until a favorable opportunity occurred of conveying him secretly on board another vessel.

It boots not now to follow the fortunes of the noble seaman further in detail; enough that they led him over the length and breadth of the earth, — in storm and tempest, in captivity and battle, in sorrow, sickness, poverty, hardship, and old age; but never, never again did they leave him in loneliness. Ever around him, — in the dungeon, on the battle field, in the still hour of calm, in sweet communion with the eternal stars, or the golden, midday sun, — in every scene and every vicissitude, the viewless, fairy spirit-voice was his constant companion.

By degrees, the lessons of wisdom, beauty, and refinement which she whispered into his ear began to tincture his character, habits, and speech. Tom began to be noted for a singular and wonderfully learned man; *awful* as a prophet, and wise beyond the simple comprehension of his poor, ignorant messmates. He would have been a mark, no less of terror than wonder, had he not borne those ineffaceable tokens of a pure life and noble purpose, which triumphed over fear and wonder, ignorance and superstition. At times he was heard conversing with the fairy presence; and then it was that his comrades understood that he was not so much "a great magician," as one of those "men of God" of ancient days, whom the Bible wrote about, who talked with the angels, and learned to converse with the wild sea-gulls and the monsters of the deep.

At times Tom became embarrassed with this "*fearsome*" reputation. When the tempests roared and the angel of destruction hovered over the ships in which he sailed, the ignorant and superstitious, who had heard wild

tales of his intercourse with invisible beings, would beseech his intercession with the "demons of the storm," or threaten him, like Jonah, to be cast into the sea.

Fondly we linger over the old sailor's magic life, with the angel-voice and the spirit-air ever around him, with the hands of the Immortal wreathing the blossoms of eternity around his yet mortal footsteps, and breathing the fragrance of celestial bowers into the murky atmosphere of his toilsome life. Toilsome, did we say? Life has been a very blessed boon to him. The darkest shades that ever obscured the vision of humanity have glowed for him with the sunlight of heaven; for heaven within his soul has never faded away since the hour when the brightest of her ministering spirits descended to tell the desolate sailor-boy that heaven was the inheritance of man, the goal of life, and had its locality within the depths of a pure and sinless spirit.

Reader, this is the history of a monomaniac. If an English jury had been called to decide upon what topic Tom Martin was actually *mad*, they would have been at a very considerable loss. Still he was a "*monomaniac*," the proofs whereof being, that he was considerably better informed, purer in morals, kinder in disposition, more refined in habits, more choice in language, more pious, honest, and intelligent than most of his other fellow-creatures; and that he, the said Tom Martin, being unable to account for the possession of these remarkable attributes in a poor, ignorant, unlearned, friendless sailor, otherwise than upon the teaching of "a spirit," the said Tom was conceived to be feloniously endued with illegitimate knowledge; and yet, not being within the pale of the law, he must necessarily be "*a monomaniac*"! If more proof were wanting, he could unerringly predict

future events; and though he ever pertinaciously insisted that this insight into the future was likewise derived from the communication of his precious spirit-whisperer, the learned of the land (Great Britain) decided that "spirit-whisperers" were not held as legal witnesses; that naturals, simpletons, and even idiots, had been known to be possessed of the gift of prophecy; that the fact of their being wiser than other people was even deemed sufficient evidence of gross deficiency of intellect, or morals; and so, as old Tom Martin had done much good service, he could not reasonably be deprived of his good service-pension and home in Greenwich Hospital; and as he was, moreover, neither simpleton, natural, nor idiot, but only flagrant in the last count, namely, that of being wiser than other people, his case was finally disposed of under the head of Monomaniac.

THE HAUNTED GRANGE,

OR THE LAST TENANT.

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MRS. HANNAH MORRISON, SOMETIMES STYLED THE WITCH OF ROOKWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

FROM the remarkable pages of the *Causæ Celebræ*, I once read an account of a murder, the details of which made such a strong impression on my mind, that I am enabled to give verbatim one or two extracts from the trial. The first is touching the appearance; the second refers to the life and reputation of the alleged murderess. They are as follows: —

"*The lamentable Murder of Lieutenant William Rochester, R. N., and the Trial of Dame Hester or Hannah Pitcairn for that wicked deed.*

"The hag, — for surely she is one, and might fain pass for a witch that could mar so fine a piece of Nature's work as Master Lieutenant Rochester, a goodly young man, and well to do, — the hag then came forward, well guarded by constables Higgins and Pell; and a terrible sight it was for Christian men to look upon one so old and stricken in years; she was, as seemed to be, nigh upon eighty, and she ported herself mightily, and like one who was no ways concerned in this most wicked murder; and when she cried aloud upon God for a witness to her innocence, she revealed her iniquity to all, saying, '*My God*, help me!' which showed that

she could not pray to the good God of our most worthy church and practices using the black arts of hell, which same might have been done in the days when all men could hear smacking like little hammers on stones and knocks as loud as that the judge and jury might hear for themselves, yet could nobody be seen to do this thing, nor could any say how the foul witch did these noises.

* * * * *

"Then came Maria Marshall also, who testified to her saying that she had lived in that house for seventy years, and could never quit it, no, not to save her life. And notwithstanding all her master's family died in that house, yet would she never go; and when she had buried them all, she lived there alone, making, as many folks said, with dead people, and especially with a white woman, who came out of the river, and used to go into the grange just at twilight, as if she had lived there, and it was a drear sight to see her garments all dripping with water, and the spectre wringing its hair to get off the water from it.

* * * * *

"When questioned if she had ever talked with the spirits of the dead, the accused would weep, and cry in a lamentable voice, 'O, my mother!' which thing displeased the judge, and he forbade her, many people thinking he did so lest the white woman might come there to help her witch child." — *Chase Chidra.*

Out of the fantastic record from which these extracts are drawn, I have compiled the following sketch of the life and times of Mrs. Hannah or Hester Morrison.

THE HAUNTED GRANGE, OR THE LAST TENANT.

How often do we look back in dreamy wonder at the course of other men's lives, whose paths have diverged so widely from the beaten track of our own, that, unable to comprehend the one spring upon which, perhaps, the whole secret of the diversity hinged, we have been fain to content ourselves with summing up our judgment in the often-uttered remark, "Well, it's very strange; what odd people there are in the world, to be sure!"

How many times these trite sentences were uttered in the village of Rookwood, (a remote and old-fashioned suburb to a large metropolitan town in the north of England,) during the last century, we cannot correctly state; but we have reason to believe that they terminated every debate, held not less than six times a day upon an average, with which the good people of Rookwood were wont to canvass the life and times of Mrs. Hannah Morrison, the last tenant of Rookwood Grange.

Few people knew much of the history of Rookwood Grange; fewer still had taken any particular interest in the sayings and doings of its last inhabitant at the time when she might fairly have laid claim to be the subject of such interest; but now that she was old, very old indeed, and worn and decrepit, and in all likelihood would soon pass away from sight and memory altogether, a strange and universal interest began to be manifested about the little remnant of life which she yet had to spin out. It was not that she had wealth to leave; poor, old Hannah! she was the last and only dependant of a broken family, who had died off one after the other in the descending scale of prosperity, while the once stately manor house had sunk into a ruin, the once high and noble owners of the soil had become petty inhabitants, and the owl and the bat had shared, with the last threadbare and ruined forms of the house of Rookwood, the desolate hearth and crumbling halls, which had once been the pride of the county side. But the house was haunted, folks said; old Hannah lived there all alone; 'tis true she had lived there time out of mind; beyond, in fact, the memory of the far-famed "oldest inhabitant;" but living there now, when not a single creature beyond the aforesaid owls, bats, and may be a very abstemious rat or two, such a one as could

live on food more fitted for the imagination than the corporeal frame, these being the only *recognized* companions whom old, dreary Hannah was known to entertain in her deep solitude, people would talk, would wonder how she could bear it, and whether or no she was not in reality in some way connected with the vague and undefined tales of "glamour" and mystery which had long been whispered about the village in connection with either the house or its inhabitants, it was not precisely determined which.

The night is bitterly cold, a sharp, driving wind is whirling round and round the ruined gables, and whistling in long and mournful cadence through the avenue of leafless trees which leads up to the desolate old pile. Ruin, every where ruin! grass-grown courts, and mouldering walls, supported by the very ivy which has so long been eating into their joists and stays, and in one remote corner there glimmers a feeble light, dim, uncertain, and visionary as the old mass of buildings itself.

Now the moon, gleaming coldly through the wild, tempestuous clouds, which ever and anon drive across the black November sky, reveals all the picturesque points of the tumble-down old place, leaving its more painful details in the favoring shadow of night. Let us follow the faint glimmer of Hannah's lamp, push open the crazy door already swinging on its broken hinges to and fro in the bitter blast, creep doubtfully through many a dim and mouldering passage, and crossing the once bright hall where yet the tattered banners wave, and the antlered pride of the forest tells the tale of gallant chase and jovial hunt, where rusty spear and broken lance repose against the crumbling walls in idle memory of dead chivalry and long-forgotten patriotism, let us enter a small, old-fashioned,

tapestried room, the only habitable corner of the desolate Grange, where sits in lonely state the last tenant of Rookwood Grange. She is clad in an uncertain colored garment. Doubtless its original shade had been black; it was now brown, rusty brown, except where a patch or two denoted its proprietor's total disregard of a union of colors. Still its threadbare and most meagre appearance was redeemed by the snow-white apron-kerchief and coif, which had been decorously arranged about the sad figure, giving the most touching and delicate evidence that propriety and cleanliness had triumphed over age and poverty. Her face, pale and worn as that of the dead, denoted extreme old age; but there was, nevertheless, something kind and affectionate in its wistful lineaments, gentle and womanly in its harshest outlines. At the moment when we first introduce her to the reader, she had removed her old, worn spectacles, and was carefully wiping them, preparatory to renewing the task of filling up with pen and ink the sheets that were before her. As she resumed her task, she sighed, and looked ruefully at the still wet, huge blots which had poured from her dim eyes to the already somewhat obscure page. Old Hannah turned over that leaf and many others; but, turn where she would, the same evidences of bitter tears and blotted pages met her eyes, and, shaking her head with a very doubting smile, she muttered, "If he ever finds it, 'tis ten to one if he can make it out." One single rap, short, but very distinct, on the panel of the door, would have caused any one but Hannah to turn to it interrogatively. She did not heed it, however, but went on soliloquizing aloud: "No, indeed; he may not find it, but then again he may." This time the knock was repeated with two additions. "Very likely; well, *perhaps* I may feel certain he will." Again

the knocking; surely old Hannah must be deaf, or so unaccustomed to visitors that she never thought of saying, "Come in." A long pause ensued, and then she murmured, "Shall I ever, O, shall I ever behold him again on earth?" Roused perhaps by the sound of her voice, another summons, consisting of three distinct and forcible raps on the door, was heard. "Soon?" cried the obtuse woman. Again the knocking resounded, and again the deaf hermit relapsed into silence; at length she shook her withered head, and muttered, "Yes, ever yes — promise, promise! but, alas! it will be in another and better world; I have waited too long in this in vain." So saying, she resumed her stump of a pen, and, carefully tilting the broken flower vase that served her for an inkstand, scratched away at some old, mildewed sheets that purported to be the "real history of Mrs. Hannah Morrison."

We may look over the old body's shoulder as much as we please, for there is no one there to interrupt us but a poor black cat, almost as blind and wearied-looking as its mistress. Silence and desolation are there, and nought disturbs the utter desertion of that lone room but the scratching of Hannah's pen and the occasional tap, tap, of a still unsatisfied visitor, who often and seemingly vainly courted her attention by sundry appeals to the door, walls, and even, as it appeared, under the very table at which she was writing; and still she wrote on, sometimes raising her head and uttering a short sentence, as if actually conversing with her unseen visitor, at other times responding only by a motion of her lips; and this very eccentric habit of talking to herself it was, which, combined with the remarkable noises which bats, owls, and other indescribable adjuncts to old ruins produced, that procured for Rookwood Grange the reputation of being haunted, and for Hannah

Morrison the character of a witch. The poor old woman's conjecture that some one, for whom she was preparing with so much care the history of "my life," might be unable to read it, was well founded, for although I am accustomed to decipher all manner of scrawls, a constant succession of mistakes, a perpetual mixture of tears and ink, a stump of a pen, and eyes of eighty-five, are too much even for my patience, and I am driven to seek other means of information. What they are matters not; suffice it that they are available, and the result is the following particulars of the life and times of Mrs. Hannah Morrison.

Chapter II.

Towards the end of the year 1780, the master of Rookwood Grange was walking slowly and sadly by the side of the deep and rapid river that ran parallel with his own park walk. The dewy twilight of an evening late in autumn had just given place to deepening night. There was a damp chilliness in the air, as if the dying summer was already withering in the old grasp of winter. Edward Rookwood was young, handsome, the father of two lovely children, and the husband of a highly accomplished wife; yet the sadness of broken fortunes and thwarted ambition was on his brow. Like all those whose affections are centred in the materialities of the fleeting moment during which we sojourn on this earth, disappointment and a restless craving for something, any thing, more, beyond, or above what he actually possessed, forever oppressed his mind.

Had he lived in the pure light of Spiritualism, his unquiet aspirations, ever tending, as they did, to the true and

beautiful, would have found reason in the study of a better and nobler purpose in creation than a mere sojourn on the earth, from which his spirit longed to flee away and be at rest. As it was, he thought bitterly of the fate which condemned him to uphold a proud name on a scanty fortune, broken by extravagance, and saddled with debt, and to maintain the show of a landed proprietor on an estate swallowed up in mortgages.

He turned with disgust from the ever-involved theme of his worldly difficulties, and gazed dreamily on the rushing current of the deep and rapid river by whose side he pursued his melancholy evening walk. "One plunge," he murmured, "the one sharp, fierce struggle between life and death, and then — peace, rest, oblivion — *ay, and after!*" Would it be all rest? Could it be oblivion? A prick of the finest blade, the sharp tooth of the smallest reptile might poison the earthly casket, and let out the wondrous thing called life: that life that thought and breathed, devised plans, and so longed for eternity, could that be soul? and how to *kill that* so as to insure oblivion." "The soul cannot die," echoed the immortal part within him. "The soul never dies," murmured the rushing torrent. "The soul lives forever," whispered the dying breeze. "Forever, forever," sang the lone stars which now began to twinkle forth one by one, repeating the tale of creation, and pointing on the dial plate of the firmament to the watchword eternity.

"Eternity! eternity! eternity!" shrieked a human soul, breaking from its narrow prison-house in the wild struggle of the foaming waters beneath the very feet of the half unconscious dreamer. A suicide! — that suicide a woman! — met his horror-struck gaze. O, the deep lesson which the presence of violent, criminal death reads to the most

hardened human heart! With a frantic effort to rescue the sinking form, Edward Rookwood dashed into the river, struggling with the desperation of a self-convicted murderer to save another from the terrible crime which he had but a moment before so coolly contemplated.

He succeeds in dragging a human form from the fierce torrent, and with much difficulty places it on the green bank beside him. A human form! Alas, 'tis *but a form!* Some fearful change has come over the creature, which a minute ago was a temple of an immortal spirit. Nature, in her truth and innocence, shrinks from the disorganized mass, destitute of the only spark which rendered it lovely. Edward Rookwood gazed in awe and terror on the woman who had killed her body, and asked where was her spirit gone. He felt she was dead; every nerve and fibre crept with a cold shudder in response to the spirit within, which told him he was looking on one who had rushed headlong into the vast abyss of eternity, and, shuddering for the suffering soul which he felt was gone to its *unprepared* account, he raised the body on his arm with the hopeless view of again searching for the extinguished spark of vitality. A low, wailing cry arrested him. He turned and gazed on a little ragged, forlorn-looking child, of about five years old.

"O, mother, mother!" she cried, "why don't you speak to me? O, why did you go into the cold river without me? O, mother, mother! do speak to little Hannah; she does love you so, mother! and this good gentleman will give us a loaf of bread, and some pennies to buy gin with, if you'll only look up and speak to me."

What a history did these few words, and the torn rags of the miserable little orphan, reveal! He gazed on the swollen, bloated features of the corpse; youth, beauty, gin,

and crime were all there; rags on her person—gin, gin stamped on all!

That night the village workhouse held the wretched remains of an unknown female suicide, and the living form of one of the most desolate little orphans that had ever entered its precincts. The generous master of Rookwood Grange would fain have taken the forsaken creature into his own family; but Mrs. Rookwood was a lady whose abhorrence of vice was manifested in *shunning* its contact, not in *curing* it; and so she would not for the universe admit within her doors the offspring of a drunkard, a murderess, and a wretch of whom no account could ever be gained. In a few years this lady departed to give an account of her stewardship in the unknown land of souls, and Mr. Rookwood, who never lost sight of the poor little orphan of the workhouse, determined to interest himself more immediately in her behalf. Hannah, as she had given her name, was now twelve years old, and on every occasion when Mr. Rookwood had, in his capacity of a parish officer or guardian, visited the workhouse, he had been overwhelmed with complaints of her unaccountable eccentricities. She had the faculty, the matron declared, of producing the most mysterious noises—knockings, and other sounds—which seemed to follow her wherever she went; consequently, as she declared, she must be either their author or cause. Mr. Rookwood reflected, and then supposed she must be a ventriloquist, and produced the obnoxious noises for mischief. The matron could not tell; Hannah was not mischievous; on the contrary remarkably amiable; still she would not or could not give any account of the knockings; hence she was a perfect terror to the neighborhood. Then she was often caught conversing

with the air, for no one was ever seen with her, yet she seemed to be holding conversations with some one.

"With herself, you mean," cried Mr. Rookwood; "there is nothing very unusual in that, is there?"

The matron pshawed and pshawed; no, it was not with herself, for she had been known to ask questions, and wait and listen as if for an answer; and yet always denied it when detected and questioned; but worse still, she predicted every thing that happened.

"Worse! Excellent, you mean," replied her patron; "she shall set to work and write an almanac."

But, above all, her greatest delinquency was a horrible power which she possessed of turning people almost to stone; for one day the matron had entered the ward unexpectedly, and found twelve of her young companions ranged up against the wall in a row, all fast asleep; so fast indeed, that she, the matron, could not wake them with all her scolding and shaking; and the terrible little witch had to run from one to the other, making mysterious signs, ere they all woke up; when they declared they had seen beautiful sights — of fields, and gardens, and fountains — and been so happy that they had even forgotten they were parish charges, and were hungry, cold, and miserable.

Despite all these abominable accusations, Mr. Rookwood, being a bold man, took the little mystic into his house, gave her good clothes, kind advice, and a fair schooling; let her wait upon his daughter, a child a year younger than herself, and found in her the loveliest, kindest, most intelligent and affectionate little handmaid that ever tended upon princess in a fairy tale.

Years rolled on, and though Hannah Morrison's eccentricities were confirmed facts, her amiability, her beauty,

and her intense attachment to her benefactor and his family, rendered her inexpressibly dear to them all. The old tumble-down mansion of Rookwood Grange had long enjoyed the reputation of being haunted; but since the admission of Hannah within its crazy walls, fresh and tangible sources of superstitious speculation had every where presented themselves. Mysterious voices, whisperings which seemed to proceed from the viewless air, unaccountable lights, and even in the dim gloaming of twilight a shadowy form, as of a woman with dripping garments and streaming hair, had been identified with the old house for some years; and wild stories were in circulation respecting the origin of these mysteries, which the family disregarded, but which the villagers placed such implicit belief in, that Rookwood Grange came at last to be regarded as an infected ship in the midst of a fleet, who were all uncertain of the actual reality and nature of an evil which they more than suspected, and shrank from with terror.

Within the haunted mansion doubts and misgivings prevailed no less keenly than in the circle of village gossips. Sights and sounds, alike unaccountable and alarming, seemed so pertinaciously to attach themselves to the presence of the hapless Hannah, that nothing but the warm affection which subsisted between the Rookwoods and herself could have so long maintained their tender intercourse. The poor girl would at times amuse them with impromptu tales of other lands, glowing with beauty and delight, which made their pulses beat and their nerves shiver in response to her wild strain of inspiration. Sometimes she would break out into a rhapsody of delicious poetry, and anon sing airs of new and unimaginable beauty, in tones whose melting tenderness thrilled every heart.

Where she acquired the knowledge and practice of these accomplishments was a profound mystery; but as their exhibition was often accompanied by remarkable and never-failing predictions, Mr. Rookwood, in his moods of dreamy abstraction, would pronounce the girl a modern type of the ancient prophetesses of Greece and Rome, and bade his children mind what Hannah said, for she was always right; then, shutting himself up in his library, he would ponder over the history of Cassandra, assure himself that there was an exact parallel between her case and that of Hannah Morrison, and, gazing down on the sleeve of his old dressing-gown, which his affectionate and industrious *protégée* had so neatly patched, wonder where the convenient rags were gone into which he had been used to stick his pen.

Mr. Rookwood's family consisted only of one son and daughter. The latter, Alice, was engaged to a young officer, who had been recently quartered in their neighborhood; and, though both the young people were poor, the aristocratic blood which ran in their veins rendered the match a congenial one to the broken-down gentleman; and so he looked complacently upon the preparations which the ever-active soul of the place — bright, cheerful, bustling Hannah — was carrying on with spirit enough for the whole family.

The fair bride herself, gentle, loving, and inanimate, looked on in perfect content and passivity, while Hannah, no longer her servant, but her friend, contrived and arranged, and drew forth from mouldy cupboards and iron-bound trunks — the dim repositories of moth and mould — stiff brocades and once gorgeous silks, which had rustled through the splendors of bygone ages in the adornment

of final arrangements more as fair and surely as the lovely Alice herself.

In these conferences the young girls were often beguiled of many a heavy thought which the last sinking fortunes of poor Rookwood engendered, by the hearty laugh and buoyant glee of young Harry, his only son, and heir to the territory of rocks and moss, which he was now deeply engaged in affecting a final mortgage upon. Harry was a noble, gallant young fellow, a lieutenant in the navy, and an honor and credit to his profession and the proud name he bore: but young Rookwood was, at the time of his sister's marriage, ignorant of a crushing blow which his unhappy father was unconsciously preparing to inflict upon him. He loved Hannah Morrison passionately, devotedly. They had been brought up together as brother and sister; but from the time when they first felt the pangs of separation — that is, when young Rookwood entered the navy, and set off on his first voyage — Hannah and Harry knew and appreciated the intense depth of their mutual affection, and their subsequent meetings and bitter farewells were all made with a thousand vows of love and fidelity — the only balm they could apply to the heavy doom of separation.

Alice was of course their confidant, and in all respects proved a generous advocate of her brother's unselfish choice; yet neither of the young people had as yet found courage to communicate their wishes to Mr. Rookwood; and he, in the abstraction of his peculiarly absent nature and overwhelming family misfortunes, had never thought of, or even suspected, the little plot that was forming to defeat all his arrangements.

The fair Alice became a bride. Hannah, with mingled smiles and tears, sobs and congratulations, hung round

her neck, and then saw her depart for her new and untried sphere of life's struggles.

Mr. Rookwood had spent much time in London on business, as he alleged, of the last importance. His son, the young sailor, had been summoned to join him; and it was after an absence of many weeks that the faded form of the old gentleman was again pressed to the heart of the weeping Hannah, as she ran to meet her benefactor on the grass-grown steps of his now fully-mortgaged house and domain.

Hannah had often remarked the sad ravages which time and sorrow were working on the once noble form of Edward Rookwood; but at this meeting she was struck with a deep consciousness of a change beyond any which had yet wrought upon his physical frame. His thin white hairs no longer contended with the fading brown which had once been the pride of his fine head. His sunken cheeks, pale lips, and dim, wistful eyes told of ages of suffering, and even privation, that went to the heart of his deeply sensitive *protégée*. As he led her into the house he perceived the emotion with which she regarded him, and strove to beguile her painful scrutiny by commonplace remarks. He told her that little Edward, Alice's oldest child, had had the small-pox, and was to come down to the Grange in a few days for dear aunty Hannah to nurse him; that little Mary, the second child, would follow, as her mother was going with her husband to Ireland for a few weeks, and that the baby wanted some of those little dainty socks which none but Hannah's nimble fingers could manufacture. While thus conversing they walked towards Mr. Rookwood's library, and as he entered it the picture of comfort it presented shot a pang into his heart such as he had never known before. The autumn

sun was kissing the tops of the distant hills, and faintly illuminating the colored panes of the shaded windows; the chill evening air, autumnal but keen, was stealing in through the creeping tendrils of the rose and jasmine, rendering the sight of a bright, cheerful fire a perfect luxury. Beside the warm, inviting hearth stood the old leathern easy-chair, footstool, and slippers of the expected guest, and the cloth spread for a dinner and tea completed the arrangements for comfort and welcome which his tender adopted child had prepared.

Heaving a deep sigh, and pushing the chair back near the window with an air almost amounting to hopeless despair, Mr. Rookwood beckoned Hannah to come to him. She obeyed, kneeling on his footstool and fondly caressing his white and trembling hand. Then it was that he told her he knew of her love for Harry, his adoration of her; that Alice had married a beggar, — herself and her children were starving; he himself was dependent on the mercy of his creditors for a shelter for his gray head; and that Harry had not even the means to purchase his necessary naval equipments, unless — and here the hoarse voice of the speaker betrayed his deep agony — unless he, Harry, the admired, the handsome, aristocratic, and gallant young sailor, immediately accepted the offer of a fair, young, and noble bride, wealthy and influential, the daughter of an admiral, and one who, having seen and loved the young man, had induced a doting father to make this tender of her hand and fortune.

That night, in the cold, white moonlight, beside the deep, rapid river where her wretched mother had sought the dark shores of eternity, the miserable Hannah sat alone — alone with God, her own blighted heart, and the spirit of the dead. In thought at least, and often in low

and broken murmurs, the unhappy young girl seemed to hold intercourse with some viewless being, who spoke to her inner life in a language which that singular young creature at least seemed to recognize and appreciate. All night she spent in that place of terror; and when the gray, cold morning sailed up in slow wreaths of misty fog over the dewy woods and lawn, Hannah Morrison, with straight, damp locks, and garments saturated with the heavy dew, might be seen flitting like an unquiet spectre back to her desolate home, with a blighted life, a seared heart, and an existence totally devoid of aim, purpose, or vitality. Her youth was gone. Joy and hope were lopped off forever; the bare, naked truth of her existence alone remained, and Hannah would henceforth live because it was God's will; but the vista of her existence would never more present any point for her aching vision to rest on but the shadowy portals of the realms of spirit-land.

"I will obey thy behest, my mother," she murmured, as she drew her cloak round her shuddering form, and traversed mournfully, but firmly, the dark fields bathed in heavy dew. "I will devote my life to the benefit of *him and his;* I will never quit the mansion which has so long sheltered me while life remains; I will never forsake one member of that family to whom I owe so much; I will never fail to work, strive, and labor for them; I will be as the ivy which clings around the crumbling walls; I will support, sustain, and comfort them to the utmost limit of my feeble power; but, like that ivy, my life shall henceforth become identified with the old ruin; and if I can but once perform any act beneficial to him, his fair bride, or — or — those who may come after him, Hannah Morrison will not have lived in vain."

CHAPTER III.

"HELL," says an old philosopher, "is paved with good intentions." Now, my own interpretation of this anomalous sentence is this: There are moments in every one's earth career where a concatenation of external circumstances combines to arrest our progress: and the adverse results of our best laid schemes of action call upon us, with a sudden and violent opposition to our will, to pause. Then it is that the guardian angels who speak to us through the still small voice of our own souls, map out for us a fresh and holier chart, in which our future existence may avoid the shoals and reefs of the past; then it is that, having admitted into our interior lives a purer influence, and determined upon a nobler principle of action in conformity with the invisible warnings within, we become doubly guilty in sinking back into the tortuous paths of error; and thus it is that those who *have* seen the light, and yet choose the darkness, are fair illustrations of the aphorism with which we started; or, in a word, realize the parable of the man, whose house being "swept and garnished, went and took unto himself seven devils worse than the first;" and so the last state of that man was infinitely more perilous than the former. Thus thought and reasoned the unhappy Hannah Morrison, when, on the day of her lover's wedding, she remembered her lonely walk in the cold dawn of the morning by the river of her mother's last crime, and remembered, too, the good intentions which had grown out of her long and bitter self-communion; and now the strength of those intentions was to be tried by the sight of him she adored as the vein of her heart,

the sun of her life, the element of her being, vowing allegiance to one whom in her inmost consciousness she believed he could not love.

"I would buy his happiness with the misery of a long life," she thought. "I would drink the cup of sorrow to the very dregs; I would steep myself to the very lips in poverty, suffering, and want to insure him a life of sunshine and peace. But O, to meet his haggard eyes, turned so imploringly to mine, without the power, or even now, alas! the right to speak one word of comfort to him! O Harry, Harry! I could bear thy loss; but I cannot thus endure to witness thy sufferings!"

Thus, in the depths of her writhing spirit, alone in her remote little chamber, reasoned the sorrowful girl, while the village bells rung out their merry peals of hollow, mocking laughter over the sacrifice of the perjured bridegroom.

Ding dong! ding dong! on they clash and gibber, while the village maids strew pale roses and spotless lilies beneath the feet of the fair and haughty bride. Ding dong! ding dong! pealing on the tuneful requiem of the dead heart of the miserable young bridegroom. Ding dong! ding dong! they shriek in the ears of the conscience-stricken father, who bares his white head to the breeze which seems whispering, "Thou hast sold thy child, and bartered thy peace of mind for a mess of pottage."

Weep for the mocking mirth of that sinful wedding day. Mourn for the white lips which pronounced false oaths at the altar dedicated to God and truth. Censure, yet pity, the guilty father who conspired to crush out the light of life and hope from two loving young hearts, that he might provide a home and comforts for that doubtful morrow which man may never dare to call his own.

Ding dong! ding dong! Will the clash of that mock-

ing peal of hollow joy never end? Evening comes, and the quiet village sleeps, while the silence of the broken-hearted rests on the loud-tongued church steeple. The bridal party close round the social board; the old man smiles wanly upon the group; the sullen bridegroom plays abstractedly with the orange blossoms gleaming through the dark tresses of the bride, on whose cold, proud, marble features neither sentiment nor passion leaves its trace to show that a breathing soul sympathized with its beautiful but lifeless casket.

And around and amidst them all flits the glancing form of Hannah; no longer the gleeful child of joy and impulse, but a quiet, subdued being, from whom the freshness of youth and the day-spring of hope had departed forever. In *action* she is the Hannah of other days, anticipating and providing for the wants of all around her; but the soul within is changed, and its impress weighs down her once buoyant step, stamps its rigid lines about the close-set lips, and ever and anon gleams forth in flashes of wild agony in the strangely bright but restless eyes.

As the night creeps heavily on, the old man, without attempting to meet her wandering glance, asks her to sing one of the songs he much loved to hear. The air is named; 'tis a merry strain, full of hope and promise, and might shed some kindred warmth over the weary circle. Hannah, ever willing to oblige, prepares to accompany herself on Alice's lute, and a sweet, gay symphony strikes the first ray of gladness to the heart of that bridal party which they have known since the sacrifice was consummated. But, even as she attempts to give utterance to the sparkling metre of the song, the fixed and gleaming eyes upturned to heaven bespeak a soul rapt and preoccupied; her fingers stray unconsciously among the strings; strange,

wild chords herald a new strain, and the following words spring spontaneously, and, as was evident to all, irresistibly from her parted lips, adapted to an air exquisitely pathetic, but peculiar, mournful, and thrilling: —

Hark! the bells of the village are pealing a strain
Of rejoicing and gladness, while over the main
This song is reëchoed in cadences rare,
Come, haste to the bridal of Margaret the fair.

They are wedded; the bridegroom has sworn the false oath
Which has bound him in fetters his spirit must loathe;
For his vows of devotion are perjury there,
And his hand, not his heart, is with Margaret the fair.

O, weep for the bridal, ill-omened and drear,
Where the false god of lucre is hovering near;
O, weep for the darkness fast gathering there;
'Tis the night of thy young life, O Margaret the fair!

Never more shall the sunlight of hope on thee shine;
Never more shall the home of affection be thine;
Thy bridegroom is withering beneath the sad chain
Which has bound him for life to the altar of gain;
Thou shalt drink of the cup of bright joy never more;
Thou shalt revel in dreams of sweet youth never more.

No angels are near thee thy future to cheer,
That future so fraught with deep darkness and fear;
Thine offspring in shame and affliction shall mourn
Thy bridal, and curse the dark hour they were born.

Hark! the bells of the village are pealing a strain
Of warning and sadness, while over the main
This song is reëchoed in cadences drear,
Woe! woe to the bridal of Margaret the fair.

Confusion and astonishment were in every face; grief and terror filled the hearts of all who listened to this ill-omened song; but the prophetess herself heeded them not. The old man, who had arisen in anger to reprove the bitterness of the disappointed maiden, received her in his arms insensible; he bore her sadly and tenderly from

the apartment, leaving behind him in the mind of the bride a sting which time ripened into a deep, deadly, and unquenchable hatred, not alone of the boding songstress, but of all who had any share in the union which she had so unwittingly formed.

Edward Rookwood saw the home of his childhood redeemed from the prey of the spoiler by the wealth of his son's bride; he was enabled to receive his widowed Alice and her three fatherless orphans beneath his roof, and confide them once more to the care of the ever fond and loving Hannah; but he also felt in his heart of hearts that the doom of the evil-doer was upon him, and the shadow of wrong was darkening his house. Already the fiat had gone forth that he should lay the treasures, for whom he had shipwrecked the happiness of two young hearts, beneath the sods of the churchyard. One by one the young blossoms, which he so cherished, faded and died; and Alice herself, the patient, long-enduring victim of pulmonary complaint, laid her head on the bosom of her distracted foster sister, and joined the angels, with whom her pure spirit had long held spirit communion in the depths of her soul. To nurse the little sufferers; in their waywardness and pain to smooth their pillows; sit, ever watchful, patient, and kind, through the long watches of the night, tending and soothing them, — had been Hannah's yearly routine of duty.

The wild extravagance and reckless folly of Harry's fine wife soon narrowed his power to aid his old father and suffering sister; and it was Hannah's task to eke out their scanty means by a thousand ingenious devices and unceasing labor. Early in the biting frosts of the winter mornings she might be seen digging roots and vegetables for their day's provisions, and gathering herbs to compound

such medicines as her skill dictated. This skill was singularly enough exercised in the surrounding hamlets, where the poor folks came from far and near to get cured of every manner of complaint by the wonderfully efficacious touch of the good doctress. Even those who were disposed to ridicule her curative power, and question with pious awe the source from whence these miracles were wrought, could not deny the *facts* that the diseased were made whole, and that the simple prescriptions of Hannah Morrison acted upon suffering creatures whom the learned among the medical faculty had pronounced incurable, even as the waters of Jordan worked on the frame of the leper in the days when Jesus of Nazareth bade the dead arise in the name of the living God.

For the honor of human nature we might suppress the odium, instead of gratitude, which followed most of these exhibitions of the kind Hannah's inspiration; but when we remember that they whom Jesus devoted his life to healing, teaching, and benefiting, condemned their Saviour to an ignominious and shameful death, we cannot wonder that the epithet of witch, and isolation from all human companionship but such as she dwelt among, were the only rewards which the poor physician ever received for her bounteous gifts of health and strength diffused with generous willingness to all who sought her aid. The exceptions to her singular faculty of healing were, alas! among those whom she would have given her own life to benefit. On the family of her protectors there seemed to hang a doom which no human skill or foresight could avert. One by one they sunk beneath the fell ravages of consumption. In vain did the unhappy Hannah nurse, and pet, and caress the little ones whom, as the children of her beloved Alice, she cherished as her own heart's core. She

toiled and slaved for them; year after year her tender care added to their slender threads of life; but the silver cord was broken at last in each little casket, and the nights which their tender nurse had sat up patching their clothes and knitting them warm stockings and wrappers, came at length to be devoted to the miserable task of adorning little winding sheets with pale flowers and tiny rosettes of pure white ribbon.

O, what bitter tears stained the ashy hue of those little grave robes! No mother or father, brother or sister, ever mourned for the untimely separation of those tiny blossoms with half the depth of anguish which wrung the soul of the lonely Hannah, as she would sit of a night making what she called their birthday garments for the home of angels. Not for them did she mourn; not for worlds would she have deprived them of "their birth into heaven." It was for her own desolate self—that heart, so full of love and tenderness, which she saw each year being stripped of some of the fair shoots about which the tendrils of her love twined like the very fibres of her being. "They will leave me; all, all will leave me," she would say to herself. "I shall be left alone in this place, and there will be none of the beloved name of Rookwood to lay my head in my long home beside them. Well, well; the place which their footsteps have hallowed shall be the last sanctuary of my heart; and, if it be God's will, *I shall be the last tenant of Rookwood Grange.*"

Chapter IV.

For some years after the death of the fair Alice, the scythe of the destroyer was held suspended, but did not descend on the fated house of Rookwood.

The poor old man, whom Hannah fostered and tended like a delicate plant, seemed to exist by a cord which strengthened with attenuation, and his old age and many sorrows developed noble qualities in his mind which lent strength and lustre to his ebbing life and faculties. The rigid features of the sorrowful "old maid" ever expanded into a smile of welcome as poor Mr. Rookwood appeared at her side. Her faithful arm was his support as they passed through the village lanes and fields on errands of kindness and healing to the sick and afflicted. It was his pride to carry her basket of little stores, and display his strength and activity by offering *her support* when the path was rough or difficult. Often they would sit far into the night, discoursing in low tones of subjects which in some ages would have condemned them both to the stake; and if evidence were needed of their dark and dangerous communion with the invisible world, the never-silent rap, tap, tap, which sounded on panels, floor and door, and the patter of unseen footsteps which kept time to their discourse, would have been evidence sufficient.

And they parted after these evening musings, the one with a calm, humble, and resigned look, which seemed to shed a halo of glory around his silvered head, and the other with an expression so exalted and unearthly, that her faded features seemed to awake into a beauty almost angelic.

If we have not, in our erratic pursuit of the fortunes of

this poor family of Rookwood, followed its young representative, — he who was once the betrothed of Hannah, and whose memory was still the cherished secret of her life, — it is because it is better to trace the course of sorrow than that of error. The lives of Harry Rookwood and his fashionable wife did realize the *early* portion of their bitter bridal prophecy. We draw a veil on the mutual relations they held in the world wherein they had frittered away many years of their existence, and come to the moment when they descend from a travelling carriage before the dilapidated gates of Rookwood Grange. With a shudder of disgust the faded belle of many seasons advances through the dark, cold hall, and leaning on the arm of her eldest son, once more stands face to face with her rival. Behind her creeps her dying husband, holding a pale, feeble boy by the hand; and he, too, approaches, looking wistfully into the eyes of his venerable old father.

Let us pause for a moment, and throw an artist's eye on the group which comprises all that now remains of the once proud and powerful family, whose name was as a tower of strength in the county of their birth. The high, arched roof of the lofty hall is lost in the deepening shades of the coming night; yet the last golden gleams of sunset are lingering on the painted glass of the vast Gothic window which terminates the apartment, and reflecting wavy streams of colored light on the faded mosaic of the floor.

The autumn breeze creeps in at the open door, and stirs the tattered banners which still hang from the tapestried walls, while the antlers of beasts of the chase, and bygone implements of war, are grimly shadowed out in the gloom of evening like fantastic figures, ready to start into life by the wave of the magician's wand. In the centre of the desolate room stands the noble form of a tall, erect old

man, with long silver curls floating over his shoulders: his face is wan and sad; yet the high forehead and calm, earnest eyes speak of a soul within which has made its peace with God. His garments are old-fashioned, patched, and threadbare; yet he wears them with the grace of a soldier and the dignity of a fallen gentleman. By his side stands the slight form of Hannah Morrison, her rusty black dress deriving a thousand graces from its exquisite neatness of arrangement, her still beautiful hair bound, like a classic statue, around her noble head, and her wild, lustrous eyes wandering timidly from one to another of the group, and settled at last on the youngest child in a gaze of tenderness and love that lighted up her faded features into an expression little short of angelic.

Fancy a fine lady of your own time, whose dress is a mixture of want and extravagance, whose brain is a milliner's shop, and whose heart is a temple to self, add thereto an unmitigated expression of dislike and contempt for all around her, and you have a full-length portrait of Mrs. Harry Rookwood. Her eldest and favorite son, whose arm she held, was a fine youth of eighteen. Pride and self-will were in his eyes, and a reflection of his mother's feelings on every lineament of his handsome face.

In Henry Rookwood's bowed form and evidently dying face Hannah looked in vain for any trace of her young sailor lover. He *was* dying! dying of *delirium tremens!* and for the first time since his miserable marriage he had gained sufficient command of his imperious wife's will to insist upon returning to finish his career, like the prodigal, on his father's bosom. As he approached this venerable parent, a strange and uncertain smile flitted over his features; his eye had met the glance of his early love, and an almost childish delight assured her she was recognized.

But the instant he beheld his father, the expression changed; a look of deep anguish arrested the welcome prepared for him, and faintly murmuring, "I will arise and go to my father," he fell on his neck and wept.

Henry Rookwood lived many months after his return to the Grange, Hannah's unceasing care, and the influence of his native air contributed to spin out a life which intemperance, a reckless career, and an ill-balanced mind had destroyed. During these months, Hannah learned, with deep grief, how surely some part of her evil prophecies had been realized; and when she followed her first and only love to his quiet rest beneath the sod, she looked up, and felt, deeply felt, how greatly his enfranchised spirit had gained by the change which had laid his form so low. The ruin and poverty which Mrs. Rookwood's extravagance had entailed upon them, compelled the haughty lady to *crave*, not *claim*, the shelter of her father-in-law's roof; and though her life was an unceasing round of complaints against the miserable fate which had doomed her to such a crazy dwelling and hateful association, she contrived to indemnify herself for her sufferings by embittering every moment of the life of the poor old man and the peaceful Hannah.

In vain the latter tried by every will and stratagem to court her affection, and influence her mind to kinder treatment of her venerable father. Mrs. Rookwood affected an intense fear of "witchcraft," and identified all her terrors with the luckless Hannah. In course of time, the real mysteries which pervaded this singular household, impressed her weak mind with actual superstitious dread; and though the effect of her vague alarm was to make her withdraw in cowardly fear from any further provocation of the terrible witch, she hated no less than she dreaded her, and whenever opportunity served, taunted the weak old

master of the Grange for harboring such a creature beneath his roof. Her life, in fact, would have been insupportable to her, but for the aid and counsel of her son William, who inherited just as much of his mother's unamiable qualities as rendered him an able coadjutor in her perpetual system of torment and annoyance. This young gentleman had a determined predilection for the sea, and having about as strong a will as his amiable mother, he finally arranged, in spite of all her tears and entreaties, to proceed to the West Indies with a friend, who procured him a berth as a master's mate. As William Rookwood had, during his father's lifetime, served as cadet and midshipman, this was a step for him; and no opposition on the part of his mother could deter him from accepting it.

Aghast at the prospect of remaining in a "haunted house" alone with a *witch* and *sorcerer*, as she stigmatized Hannah and her reverend father-in-law, Mrs. Rookwood hastily gathered together her effects, and made a precipitate retreat to the house of a distant relation in London, from whence she occasionally communicated with the inhabitants of the Grange, but to which she never again could be induced to return. We must now speak of one more tenant of this dreary mansion, and one to whom we have as yet but slightly alluded. This was Harry Rookwood's youngest child, a little boy of about twelve years old.

Mrs. Rookwood had lost several children before the birth of this one, and he was so puny and sickly, that she had little hope of rearing him, except with an amount of care and watchfulness which it was not in her heartless nature to bestow.

All of love that she was capable of separating from her

own individuality was lavishly bestowed on William, her first born, her pride, her darling, and, as was before stated, her warm coadjutor in the persecution of the poor tenants of the Grange. To them, however, the helpless, neglected little Edward became a source of deep interest and ultimate affection. The poor child, unused to any share of maternal love, and pining for the stolen caresses of his dead father, would steal away and nestle among the flowers which waved over that father's grave, and weep away the livelong hours in fruitless lamentations for his loss. When the tender-hearted Hannah first discovered the little mourner frantically hugging the cold clods that covered the only being that had seemed to love him, she found it almost impossible to speak comfort to the wrung and bleeding little heart, or to wile him away from his lonely "home." He had never heard the words of kindness except from his father's lips, and it was long ere he could believe that any one loved "the poor, sickly thing," besides him who was sleeping below.

How she won that sorrowful heart at last, and spoke such comfort to the bruised spirit, that the little boy would look up to heaven, instead of down to earth, for his dead father, was never known; but when his careless mother bade him go and pack up his trunk for London, the little fellow stoutly refused, and, clinging round the neck of Hannah Morrison, or hiding his head beneath the lapels of his grandfather's coat, he vowed he would never leave them until he went forth like a man to make a fortune for them. Mrs. Rookwood pshawed, sneered, and yielded with so excellent a grace, that she never even thought from that moment of any other provision for her little boy, or of inquiring how the poor inhabitants of the Grange were to bear this additional charge to their needy

household. She departed, and young Edward remained, growing up in strength, and health, and beauty, the pride of two hearts who almost shared adoration for him with their God. Years sped swiftly by; and with their flight came to the heart of Hannah Morrison the last and heaviest stroke which the chain of human destiny could impose. The venerable and generous protector of her youth, the father, friend, and counsellor of her riper years, the precious and reverend charge of her own old age, the noble master of Rookwood, lay dead. Ninety and seven had been the years of his pilgrimage, and yet the hour of separation and rest for that toil-laden spirit was one of thick and impenetrable darkness to the stunned and bewildered Hannah. In vain she recalled the deep wisdom of the lessons she had learned — the philosophy of life and death, assurance of the soul's individuality, and the earth-form's worthlessness. In vain she recognized his spirit presence around and about her; she gazed on the lifeless clay she had so loved, and finding no response on the pale, set lips, no returning look of love in the sealed eyelids, she forgot, for one hour of agony, God and heaven, and, in the blindness of her affliction, looked abroad on the world as a prison house, and her own organization as the chains and fetters which kept her from the presence of her lost idol. The hour of madness passed away; truth and light dawned upon her soul once more. She even smiled again, when many a fond token of angel presence and spirit care surrounded her lonely footsteps; and what tender offices she henceforth performed for the dead were done in memory of his earthly pilgrimage and affectionate reverence for the exalted condition to which she knew his bright spirit had now gone; and on the following Sabbath evening, as she drew away his poor sobbing Edward from the

quiet, shady nook where they had laid him, she softly whispered, "Come home, darling, and commune with the ever-living *spirit* of thy father, and leave the dead form to the oblivion of dust and ashes."

It was some few months after the death of their father that the brothers of Rookwood once more met beneath their paternal roof. William had but just returned from sea, when he heard of his father's decease, and hastened down immediately to the Grange, less to take possession of his wretched inheritance of crumbling ruins than with the affectionate wish to ascertain in what condition his poor sick brother, as he had been taught to call him, would be left. His kindness was amply rewarded by the sight of that brother, a fine, hale, handsome young man of twenty; and being thus satisfied upon his ability to help himself, he began to question him upon his prospects in life. These he soon found were vague enough. The small annuity on which the inmates of the Grange had for years subsisted had expired with the master, as he was called by the county folks about. Poor old Hannah's little savings, the produce of their kitchen garden, and the spoils of the chase and river, had been the only provision which the young man, all strange in the world's ways, had since that event deemed it necessary to make; and his brother William found him at the very period when his active mind was full of a thousand undigested schemes for the foundation of the huge fortune which he determined his beloved mother, as he ever called old Hannah, should yet enjoy.

Many and interesting were the plans which the brothers discussed for the younger's future career. It was evident that William had not redeemed the evil promises of his youth. Bold, reckless, and dissolute, he had entered the

navy in time of war, and risen with a success and rapidity that could have only been accorded to such daring and adventurous spirits. Still his dissolute life and habits retarded his promotion to that rank which would place the lives and fortunes of others at his disposal; and, despite his gallantry and valuable services, the lieutenant was often reminded that he must become a gentleman ere he could take rank as a post-captain in the British navy.

Bitterly as he resented this check to his daring ambition, he still retained the most ardent enthusiasm for his profession, and urged his young brother, with all the eloquence he was master of, to join his own ship. Finding that Edward would not listen to a word disrespectfully spoken of the old witch, as he longed to call poor Hannah, he changed his tack, and taunted him with ingratitude in not taking some steps to better the condition of one who had so long and faithfully served the family. He showed him, with much point, the disgrace of his idle and useless life, vegetating, as he called it, in the midst of rats and ruins, when there was such a field for the acquisition of wealth, fame, and glory in the profession of the navy. What he might do for Hannah, how he might serve his country and benefit the world, were themes which the bold sailor handled so well and skilfully, that the young man at length resolved to quit his ruin, his more than mother, the rooms and galleries where he had been used to walk and dream of communion with his long deceased ancestors, and follow his gallant brother to scenes of fame and glory.

Let us forbear to paint the horror, grief, and astonishment of the unhappy Hannah, when she heard, for the first time, of this fatal resolution. She knew the Rookwood spirit, and felt it would be as idle to contend with

the waves of the ocean in its wrath, as to move the determination of one of this stubborn and doomed race.

For many long years she had been accustomed to sum up her whole stock of earthly hope and happiness in the existence of Edward Rookwood. In his person she beheld the only living representative of that line in which her own humble identity had been merged. She never thought of William as in any way connected with the beloved master, or the now desolate old Grange. She remembered when the first Mrs. Rookwood would send for her on holidays from the parish workhouse, and set her in the midst of the children to hear a chapter in the Bible read, and eat cake and wine. The old hall, now so lone and dreary, she remembered then so warm, and bright, and joyous, while blooming children played among its strange decorations. Mrs. Rookwood, so fair and stately, lectured and smiled on, scolded and petted, all who came near her; and the master, the noble master, with his brown curls and kind, dreamy eyes, looked a blessing upon every creature that approached him. She had seen the little forms that once flitted through this happy scene grow up into men and women, while other, and even dearer, infants sported around the same hall. She had seen three generations, all bound to her by ties of the fondest love, move in their places for a brief while, and then pass away, their very memories, like spectres of the past, only haunting the regions of her own troubled brain.

She had beheld the realization of a terrible prediction, made to her by *whom* and *when* no living creature could tell, and yet one which, despite her own invariable silence, had become a byword in the country side. It was, that the house of Rookwood should pass away, its walls crumble into dust, and she herself be the *last tenant* of

the old Grange. She thought of these things, and, with the fatalism which so often realizes a groundless prediction, she resolved never with life to quit the melancholy pile; and yet she was to be torn from the last of all those whose lives and memories seemed centred in him. She was ever possessed with a secret idea that William Rookwood would die a sudden and violent death. Of his mother she scarcely entertained any memory. In Edward, then, was her last, her only chord of human love entwined; and to lose him, to see him depart a wanderer on the wide and fathomless ocean, O, anguish intolerable! Yet she packed up his clothes, and knocked and hammered up an old trunk to furnish him out a sea chest.

O, Edward Rookwood! could you but coin the bitter drops of agony and affection that watered every article that filled that trunk into gold, you would never need to go across the wide, trackless ocean in search of wealth!

He had to go to Portsmouth to be fitted out for his voyage, and so poor Hannah had not even the satisfaction of seeing him in his sailor's jacket; but he had an excellent talent for drawing, and the first letter she received with his final adieus contained a capital likeness of Edward in his tar's costume; and when old Hannah's rusty, patched, and party-colored gown was taken off for the last time, to be exchanged for the garments of the tomb, this little drawing was found carefully enveloped in many rolls of silk and linen, and stitched in that portion of her dress which had covered her heart!

CHAPTER V.

FOR two or three years after her first parting from Edward Rookwood, Hannah Morrison lived a life out of whose deep seclusion many sources of quiet happiness were derived. The first pang of separation over, she would gaze into the dim vista of the future with bright anticipations of the blessed day when *he* would return. No matter how long or uncertain the period of his voyage, Hannah's remarkable gift of prescience enabled her to determine the weary moments of absence, and calculate with a mother's tender interest upon the precious white day of his return. Alone, ever alone, as she was, no one ever heard the desolate old woman express a yearning for the boon of human companionship. Her affectionate adopted son kept her as well supplied with money as his own extravagance, fostered by the evil association of his reckless brother, would permit.

This fact was known to many of the surrounding villagers, whose business it was to comment upon their neighbors' affairs in general, and "old witch Hannah's" in particular; hence it was inferred from her miserably poverty-stricken mode of life, and extremely threadbare appearance, that she had added to the vice of sorcery that of being a miser, and on this point, at least, public opinion was not quite at fault, for aside from a few purchases of the simple medicines which she was ever employed in dispensing to the poor, and the worsted and twine with which she knitted warm clothes for the barefooted children of poverty around her, or nets for the poor fisher boys, who could not obtain the means to buy them for themselves,

Hannah Morrison was never known to expend a single copper on the supply of her own meagre household, or necessary wants. Could those who speculated so curiously on the disposal of the money, which, it was generally understood, young Edward brought home to his foster mother, have seen its actual destination, they would have exchanged the sobriquet of miser, it may be, for that of prodigal; for what other word could embody the profuse generosity with which the poor solitary would pour out into her darling's hand the accumulated sums which she had carefully heaped up in his absence, only to return to him again on the eve of his departure for a fresh voyage, when extravagance had reduced the young sailor to his last shilling?

She never asked how he bestowed these sums, but she hung with almost childish delight over his new jackets or warm dreadnought wrappers; and then, when his sea chest was freshly stowed and packed full of new and handsome "riggings," she would sigh to think she had no more savings wherewith to purchase him a smart purse or a fine neckerchief, as a final parting token of her inexhaustible love. The young man, whose generous nature was warped, but not destroyed, by his brother's injurious influence, accepted these long-hoarded savings with reluctance, often with a sense of shame, but only when he perceived old Hannah's settled determination in the appropriation of her money, and upon her solemn assurance that she never wanted for any thing. It was true he would look round the desolate ruin which sheltered the faithful prop of his fallen house, and sigh when he remembered how far the sums he had so profligately lavished would have gone to repair the once stately home of his forefathers, and have converted the tottering walls into the life and light of long-forgotten architectural beauty; but it was not to be. There

was a spell upon the old Grange and its last tenants, for there were still *more than one.*

Edward never failed, on his return from each voyage, to spend some days at least at the Grange; and Hannah measured *her* life by these days. She spent weeks, months, even years alone there, but she lived with Edward Rookwood; his few days' visit was her life, and so she had not yet become the "last tenant."

It was at the period when we first presented her to the reader, that the anticipation began to creep like the impending night of the soul over her that she was at length doomed to realize, in her present condition, the terrible prediction we have alluded to. To the fierce and bloody strife of distant war, the ship of her precious one had long since been ordered; and though month after month glided by, poor Hannah looked to the renewal of her life in *his* return in vain. Was she growing so very, very old, that her faculties were quite failing her? or where was her wondrous gift of second sight? and why was she now, as heretofore, unable to determine the day of his return, or even the fact of his existence at all? And yet, this was so; for the first time in her life she was unable to penetrate the deep cloud which seemed to thicken around the fate of him on whom her own hung. As she sat in the one habitable room in the fast-crumbling ruin, and dimmed her glazing eyes over the midnight lamp which streamed on the faded characters of his last letter, dated, O, so many, many weary months ago! a promise — ever a promise of his return — seemed to be communicated to her from sources only known to herself; but when? when? The question, unanswered still, was at length the point in the horizon of her fading existence, and when? when? became the watchword of her life. Never, never! would spring up from the depths of

her sickening heart, as each nightfall came like a fresh pall on the hopes of the day; and "soon, soon!" echoed the invisibles; and Hannah slept, and arose to another day of solitude and sorrowful expectation. Ever and anon she murmured, in half querulous reply to the air in whose vibrating space she seemed to hold converse, "Yes, yes, 'tis well to assure me he will return; I *know* he is not with the angels, and so in form again he *will* return; but when? and who will be the last tenant of the old Grange?

"Ah me! I will leave him some memento (should it be indeed *his* fate) that will tell him of her who has suffered and borne such ages of sorrow and loneliness within these walls. Surely the example of his poor old nurse will teach him patience; and *should he be the last*, no matter — I will even sit down and write my history."

How many long days and weary nights were beguiled by this unique attempt at autobiography we know not; it must have occupied many weeks after it was first commenced, for worlds of yellow MSS. have been rescued from the dust and worms of Rookwood Grange, purporting to be the life and times of Mrs. Hannah Morrison; and a huge volume could have been compiled from the leaves which have served as the storehouse from which we have gleaned these scraps of knowledge of this poor old-world house and its last inhabitant.

The story from the pen of the original historian at least must have been drawing to a close, for here ends its authoress's authority; and to tradition and the pages of the judicial trial, with which my story commenced, am I compelled to resort to fill up the hiatus which would otherwise have occurred in the subsequent life of the Witch of Rookwood.

Tap, tap, tap! The rats and bats are busy to-night, or the martins are building beneath Hannah's table; yet she writes on. Rap, rap! She raises her head mechanically; around her chair several small knocks are heard; her dim eyes fill with tears; she gazes like an insane old creature, as she surely is, tenderly and lovingly abroad into the darkness of the room, then carefully wiping her spectacles, prepares to resume her task. Tap, tap, tap! cry the invisibles; and crash! a sound is heard unlike any of the ordinary noises of that weird mansion; footsteps! and more than one, it would seem, and they pass with sounds of violence, slamming of doors, and shuffling feet, stirring up the echoes of the old ruin into all manner of fantastic sounds.

Hannah listens. At first the sound of footsteps brought her to her feet with a cry of delight almost superhuman; a moment's pause, and her dead heart refuses to vibrate to the sound of that unaccustomed tread. It is not he; he has passed the passage which leads to her room, and now — some one ascends the stairs. A dead silence; have the footsteps passed away, or were they the spectred sounds of her own brain? Ah, hark! they resound overhead; some portions of the crumbling ceiling, shaken by the heavy vibration, fall on the floor beneath. Again all is still; a pause, once more a rustling in the passage; uncertain steps ring across the marble hall. Hannah springs up with beating heart, rushes to the door; on the threshold encounters the staggering form of a man. He enters — it is a sailor; she whirls the dim lamp above her head in frantic joy, then holds it aloft suspended, in the agony of disappointment, as she encounters the malicious and drunken glare of William Rookwood.

"Where is your brother?" she faintly articulated;

"where is Edward? O, tell me, for God's sake! Is he well? — is he living?"

"A pretty reception for the heir of Rookwood Grange," shouted the reeling drunkard; "and a pretty ghost of a place you have made of Rookwood Grange, old haridan!" he added. Then, without waiting to answer her appeals for information concerning her darling Edward, the savage sot proceeded to reproach the old woman bitterly for the dilapidation of what he called his home, and declared that he had returned to take possession of his estate, and that he would commence by getting rid of the witch who had so long infested it.

In vain the unhappy Hannah remonstrated; William Rookwood insisted upon the "foul sorceress" quitting the house that very night; and finding her arguments and entreaties only provoked the inebriated ruffian to the cowardly act of striking and throwing pieces of broken furniture at her, she proceeded, in the depth of a bitter winter's night, to quit the roof which had sheltered her for seventy years. Fearing that the wretched creature would seek refuge in some other part of the building, the sailor, who appeared to be possessed with the spirit and vengeance of a demon, hounded her out through passage and hall, until she had gained the flight of moss-grown steps which led up to the entrance; there he paused, and there too paused the object of his fury. But while the two stood confronting each other, a change seemed to come over the figure of the aged woman, which completely arrested young Rookwood's further aggressions. Her form grew erect, her eyes brightened with a sublime fire; a strange light seemed to play around her withered features, illuming their faded outline with a ghostly shadow of their former loveliness;

and her voice rose into wondrous majesty and power, as she thus addressed him : —

"I leave you, man of crime and *coward* — I leave you, and by your side I leave the shadow of your own ill deeds, which shall pursue you through your life, and stamp its impress on your immortal soul. O William Rookwood! when you remembered that you were the inheritor of a few tottering walls and ivied casements, why did you forget that you were also an heir to eternity, and the proprietor of a home in the long ages of immortality. When you boasted of your earthly father's lineage, why did you forget that you were also a child of God? Rookwood, the eye of thy Father is upon thee! bury thyself deep within the caverns of the rocks, or the jungle of the forest, still his searching glance shall detect, his mighty arm shall reach thee. His still small voice, caverned within the jewel of thy own soul, shall demand of thee what use thou hast made of the talents confided to thee; of the strength which thou hast exerted against a feeble old woman — the last follower of thy doomed house; of the wealth which thou hast squandered in infancy, the ability which thou hast perverted to vice; of the mind, intellect, and glorious boon of reason which thou hast drowned in the hideous slough of intoxication! William Rookwood, as I look upon thee now — a creature gifted with a spark of divinity itself, a soul, a portion of thy own supernal Father — I behold thee raising a cup to thy lips which sinks the God within thee below the level of the vilest thing that shares with thee the gift of life and instinct!"

She descended the steps, and William, awed by the power and terrible strength of her tone, would have recalled her, when she again turned, and fixing upon him a look of unutterable pity, she murmured, "Father, forgive

him; he knows not what he does." In another moment her tall figure was lost in the blackness of night and the waving pines of the forest.

William Rookwood staggered back into the house; the crazy door swung to and fro, then closed with a loud and startling crash, while the moaning wind swept like a requiem around the ivied tower, and stirred the old green moss-covered bell, which, for the first time in many years, boomed in hoarse and mournful cadence to the wild wind's shriek.

Chapter VI.

Wild and bitter blew the cold winter blast, sweeping around the lonely wood through which Hannah Morrison took her way on the night of her expulsion from Rookwood Grange. For twenty years she had traversed the same path, which in one single hour had become suddenly strange to her. She had flitted through the mazes of the forest paths, when they had covered the ground for many miles with the tiny patter of infancy and the elastic step of youth; she had seen the giant oak levelled, and its mysterious arches broken, to make way for the habitations of man; and she had watched the growth of village after village among the green savannas, where she had so delighted to bury herself in her strange, lonely childhood; yet now the footway, so familiar by the intercourse of a long life, had changed. The stunned spirit was stronger than the associations of many years; and she had to stop and recall with a determined effort her feeble memory ere she could assure herself that she was travelling the old familiar road on that bleak December night. Hannah Morrison was in fact the living spirit of the old Grange;

she had become identified with its existence, and, ceasing to be a part of its identity, her own was lost. She did not know herself; she was no more Hannah of the Grange — so she was nothing. She knew not herself, her way, scarcely the fact of her being. A slight circumstance awakened her bewildered intelligence. The moon, cold, large, and spectral, broke through huge banks of wildly-drifting clouds, and poured its intense yet dreary light upon the bleak scene, giving to view a figure advancing directly towards the fugitive.

The path was narrow, and Hannah drew aside to let the stranger pass; but as he neared her he stopped, and she perceived it was a slight, youthful-looking sailor, who seemed desirous of accosting her. He asked her, in a low, trembling voice, the way to Rookwood Grange. Hannah started — paused; but roused in an instant by the ability to serve another, she courteously directed him, and each passed on their way.

The village inn was closed for the night. Its inhabitants were preparing for rest, when they were startled by a summons for admittance at the door.

"Travellers at this hour!" cried the landlord; "what can it mean!"

Louder and louder shrieked the whirling blast; and the deep-mouthed thunder, rolling in the far-off distance, murmured in his ear, "Hasten to help the benighted wanderer at such an hour of storm and peril." Hastily unbarring the door, the landlord of the Green Dragon confronted — amazement and confusion! — no benighted traveller seeking the hired shelter of a public inn, but the forlorn and woe-begone figure of the terrible "Witch of Rookwood."

"God save us!" muttered the terrified man. "What would you, goody?"

"Shelter and rest till the morning," she faintly replied.

"Why, dame," said the trembling host, "are you not mistress of a fine house up yonder, and ——"

"And I have been turned out half an hour ago, to wander abroad and seek shelter where I could. If you be a Christian man, let me in till morning."

"I daren't do it, I daren't do it, woman," replied the man, doubly terrified at the tale he heard, the sight of his awful visitor, and her appeal in the name of Christianity. "*I am a good Christian;* and so, in the name of God and all the saints and angels, witch, woman, or devil, I bid ye begone!"

Worked up to frenzy by his own exorcism, he banged the door violently in the face of the poor wanderer, and retreated to his warm, cosy fireside to pray for protection against the wiles of witchcraft, Satan and all his imps.

How many more doors were shut by the hands of coward superstition against the unhappy Hannah that night, we will not, for the honor of human nature, relate. A stranger descending from a stage-coach, at a cross-road which turned off from the highway, in the first cold gray peep of coming day, found the sorrowful and lonely old woman seated under a hedge, sleeping soundly from sheer weariness, cold, and heart-sickness. Gently rousing her from her unnatural slumber, the man stripped off a thick, warm cloak, and enveloped her in it; then, gazing at her with anxious scrutiny, and availing himself of her stupor and confusion to examine her features and appearance as well as the uncertain light would permit, he threw his arms tenderly around her, and, with every endearing word of affection, old Hannah found herself once more clasped to the heart of her adopted son, her soul's well-beloved, Edward Rookwood.

The tale of each was soon told. Edward had landed with his brother at Portsmouth the day before; he had not expected to join him for some time, having been left behind to fulfil certain matters of business. He had, however, sent on a letter and some money to his beloved mother, and intrusted this to his brother's care. A presentiment of evil, a shadow of approaching ruin, for which he could not account, he said, had strangely, but irresistibly, impressed him; and while in the very midst of performing the most important duties, he felt himself unable to resist its influence, and, without any settled purpose, he had been, as it were, compelled to set off for Rookwood Grange that night, and, happily, arrived at the very time and place when his aid was most necessary to his poor old nurse and friend. Of his brother's conduct he said little, attributing it entirely to the frenzy of inebriation; but it was easy to see, as he led his charge back to the Grange with the positive determination that she should instantly return, that a deep and burning indignation filled his heart at the brutal treatment she had experienced.

Two hours later, a sailor, bareheaded, with wild and staring eyes, ghastly cheeks, and frantic haste, thundered at the door of the magistrate of Rookwood, calling upon him and all the astounded inhabitants of the village to hasten to the Grange, where lay his brother William, whom he had found alone in the mansion foully and mysteriously murdered.

On and on poured the eager throng, like vultures attracted by human prey, until the old ruin was filled with crowds of wondering and aghast spectators of a truly horrible scene. There, on the floor of the room which had recently been tenanted by old Hannah, lay the body of William Rookwood, cold, dead, barbarously murdered,

—his head shattered by a pistol bullet, and his body gashed and cut in innumerable places. Near the hideous spectacle knelt the unfortunate old woman, who was in reality scarcely less an object of terror than the corpse itself.

Of the terrible tragedy no other account could be gained than that she and Edward Rookwood had entered the house together, as has been before described, and had entered it to find the wreck of humanity they now beheld. To search the body, the house, and its vicinage, for traces of the murderer, was of course the first act of the officers of justice, who speedily appeared on the scene; but when no vestiges of any strangers could be found, nor no clew appeared to present itself to the author of the foul and bloody deed, the sum of suspicion connected the names of the "terrible witch" and his own brother with the cause of William Rookwood's mysterious murder. Soon the murmur arose into clamor, and the charge against the unhappy pair came to be thundered against them by the public voice, and resulted in their arrest and incarceration, to await the result of a coroner's inquest.

Full a century had elapsed since the stately manor house of Rookwood had passed into the hands of its present owners, and during that century the mutations of fortune had hallowed it as the home of much affliction, but ever-living human love. That drear night it was tenanted *alone* by the one ghostly, dead form of the hapless William Rookwood. *Alone* and unwatched, he lay on his bloody bier, while a hand of shadowy but gigantic proportions seemed to fill the empty space around with huge letters, which, seen by the unthinking children of life and revelry, might read, "*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*" That night, too, the last of the long

and proud line who had given their name to the drear old mansion, together with its *last tenant*, sat apart and desolate in separate cells, charged with the crime of this mysterious and unnatural murder.

When the circumstances are fully considered, it will scarcely be a matter of surprise, that suspicion should attach itself to the unfortunate Edward Rookwood and Hannah Morrison. The expulsion of the latter by the victim on the night of his murder was already well known; Hannah had applied for shelter to several persons on that night; and as she had meekly, but simply, accounted for her appeal by stating that she had been expelled from the Grange, some color was given to the charge that she harbored feelings of vengeance against her persecutor. When are added to that her fame as a sorceress, and the evil name her strange and isolated life had earned for her, it is no wonder that the public voice was raised in frantic clamors against her. There were many circumstances also which justified the idea that Edward Rookwood had either participated in, or been the actual perpetrator of, the crime. The brothers had never (*to the certain knowledge of the neighbors*) lived in cordiality with each other. The hatred of William and the passionate attachment of Edward to the old "witch wife" were notorious facts. What so likely, then, (argued the villagers,) as that Edward, returning, and finding her expelled from her home on such a night, had quarrelled with, struck his brother, and, in a fit of passion, murdered him? Besides, who else could have done it? The accursed pair it was who had found the body, and given the alarm. No one else could have had any interest in committing so useless a deed. There was a report that William Rookwood had returned from a privateering expedition with an immense sum of money;

but as he came to the Grange alone, and at night, without luggage, and seemingly without object, it was impossible that any one could have known his arrival, and come there to rob and destroy him. In short, setting aside the questionable reputation of old Hannah, there seemed to be evidence enough of a purely circumstantial nature to justify a coroner's jury in committing the young sailor and his unfortunate old nurse to the county jail to take their trial for the wilful murder of Lieutenant William Rookwood, late of his majesty's ship Retribution, of Rookwood Grange, in the county of Hants, &c.

By the records kept of "the memorable trial of Hannah Morrison and Edward Rookwood for the murder of the latter's only brother," we learn that the excitement which prevailed on the occasion exceeded any thing that had ever been witnessed by any of the actors in the scene. The prisoners had neither of them the means to engage counsel in their defence, and the legal assistance that the laws of the country afforded them was insufficient to combat the tremendous array of evidence which every day's inquiry brought against them. In a deep gash on the throat of the victim a small point of steel had been found, which evidently fitted to a knife or some other similar steel instrument; in all probability the one which had been used to perpetrate the terrible deed. It is true there were many points in the evidence incomplete; for instance, the most minute search could not detect any traces of the pistol, or the sharp weapons which must have been employed in the murder, nor could it be divined what had become of the instruments at all. Still the evil reputation of the unhappy prisoners supplied every deficiency of detail, and, after a lengthened and exciting trial, the prisoners were pronounced guilty, and sentenced to expiate their crime by

the ignominious death of the gallows. When the usual query was put to them as to whether they had any thing to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon them, young Rookwood gazed tenderly upon his unfortunate companion, but replied simply, that if the plain statements of his truth and innocence had been unable to save him, he had nothing more to urge.

The unhappy Hannah had, throughout the trial, conducted herself in a manner which rather tended to confirm than dispel the supposition of her guilt. Her appealing glance was perpetually wandering from young Rookwood to his judges. Of her own situation she seemed almost unconscious. A wild and most unsatisfactory account of her night's proceedings was all they could extract from her relative to her share in the tragedy; but when they spoke of *him*, her eager eyes seemed to read the souls of judge, jury, witness, and counsel, as if her very salvation depended on each word they should utter for or against her darling. The proceedings of this remarkable trial were characterized, we are told, by divers singular noises, emanating, as it would seem, from stationary benches and inanimate articles, where no human contact could account for the mystery of their sound. Sometimes the tables and chairs used by the learned gentlemen of the law would be violently shaken, and if unoccupied, quite overturned; yet all this without any visible agency to account for the same, except the weird reputation which the female prisoner was known to possess. "The gentlemen of the long robe" were much perplexed, and it was even thought somewhat startled, by these mystic signs of an unaccountable intelligence; for intelligence it certainly was, since the noises (resembling in sound and force the heavy drumming of a stick) would seem to emphasize various sentences

spoken, and especially any in favor of the prisoners, when a most indecorous number of loud knocks, in the form of applause, would invariably startle the astonished listeners from their propriety, and curdle their blood with very terror. Despite these invisible warnings, however, the trial proceeded, and the dread sentence was about to be passed, when old Hannah, seeming at length to collect her bewildered faculties into one superhuman effort, rose, and cried aloud, "Men of blood, *legal murderers*, forbear to condemn the innocent! *I murdered William Rookwood*, and his brother Edward knows no more of his death than you do; and now, I ask you, where are your laws, your judgment, your penetration? — that you, fathers, husbands, and brothers would take an innocent man, and publicly kill him, strangle him in cold blood, and call that justice. Are ye men or butchers? — that you would slaughter your fellow-man upon suspicion of a crime which you cannot prove. How dare ye thrust an immortal soul back into the unknown land of mystery and spirits without a passport from Him who sent it forth? What account shall ye render to God for the life which is placed at your disposal? Is it a light thing to crush out the vital principle which ye can never, never restore? Pluck the meanest daisy from the mountain side, and ingraft it again upon its parent stem if ye can? Trample on the life of the smallest insect that crawls, and relight, if ye can, the little lamp which God's own breath has kindled. How dare ye kill? How dare ye lay violent hands on the principle of life? the only barrier which God has set to the knowledge of man, the only limit to his intelligence, the only light which ye may put out, but can never kindle."

The astonished court would have interrupted this extraordinary address, but the singular and powerful impetus of

the speaker defied their will to arrest, and once more she addressed them, sighing deeply, and gazing fondly at Edward as she spoke. "Thou art rescued from the hands of these butchers, my child; and for me, my race must be nearly run, my mission well nigh accomplished. If these men choose to steep their souls in crime, and, following my example, dare to send their fellow-being into the world of spirits unsummoned, theirs be the responsibility; and, O, a heavy one they will surely find it! It has been given to them to *check* crime; but if they rather choose to *avenge* it, it will be for them to learn that vengeance belongeth to God, not to man, and surely '*he will requite.*'" One of the astounded jurors, overpowered by this unlooked-for scene, muttered in his terror, as the only sentence that seemed to possess his mind, the words, "Blood for blood;" "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood —" "*Not* be shed," again broke in the impetuous criminal. "*Who* spoke these words, and to *whom* were they addressed? They were spoken by one who knew not that he possessed an immortal soul, and addressed to savages who could only be governed by the fear of death, the dread of temporal punishment, or the stimulus of temporal reward. Think you, if Moses and the Israelites had known that the *spirit*, and not the *body*, must answer for their deeds, that they would have avenged one murder by committing another? or perilled their own souls because another had set them the example?"

"Silence, audacious and most hardened criminal," thundered the clerk of the court, roused at length from the stupor of astonishment to a sense of duty and propriety thus grossly invaded. "I have done," replied the daring prisoner; "it is for yourselves to complete the work of destruction; only I would counsel you all to exalt your gallows

to the loftiest pinnacle of heaven, that your very children and babes may learn, when they assemble in multitudes to see how their fathers strangle their human sister, that there is no crime in murder, provided it be done in the light of the sun, the presence of an admiring crowd, and, above all, in *cold blood*."

That night saw Edward Rookwood free, and Hannah Morrison the inmate of the condemned cell. Meantime hundreds and thousands of good and pious people began to assemble from all parts of the county, to await the day of execution, and enjoy the double spectacle of a witch and a public murder.

Chapter VII.

"And have you nothing to say — no confession to make? Unhappy old woman, bethink thyself; to-morrow thou wilt stand before a more terrible tribunal than that of man, where your obstinacy will avail you nothing. Think of this, and heed my words."

"What would you have of me?" murmured Hannah Morrison, now a captive in the condemned cell of S—— jail, and doomed to die on the morrow the death of the felon and murderess.

"I would have a full confession of your enormous crime, woman," replied the chaplain of the prison; "and I beseech you to ease your black conscience of a part at least of its heavy burden by making it."

"I have avowed myself the murderer of William Rookwood, reverend sir," replied Hannah, calmly; "but that, it seems, is not enough; you must have the *details*, the *acts*, and *facts*, and *bloody minutiæ* of a revolting murder

to satisfy justice. Well, well, that is natural enough, when I come to think of it; justice is but a murderess herself, and, doubtless, revels in such histories as these. It little matters the *purpose* — that is answered, one would think, by the knowledge of the perpetrator; but what is that compared to the choice relation of the harrowing details? Good! good!" she cried, laughing wildly; "why to hear *how* the murder was committed will be almost as good as to see it done; and next to the entertaining spectacle of my own murder to-morrow ——"

"O, hush, hush! in mercy be silent!" exclaimed the unhappy Edward Rookwood, rising from an obscure corner of the room where he had sat with his face buried in his hands. "Good God, sir! can you derive either profit or enjoyment from the hideous details you seek? If the ends of justice require this woman's life, take it and be satisfied with your victim; cease thus to gloat over the useless horrors of the revolting story."

"Be patient, child, yet a moment; child of my love! my soul's sun! my Edward!" whispered the captive; "and for you, holy sir, you cannot, may not, enjoy this choice history alone; call in your witnesses, and summon all your eager fellow-executioners; I have a most amusing scene to enact for their edification, and details to gratify the largest possible number with the coveted feast of blood."

Urged by her entreaties and goaded on by her taunts, the chaplain summoned various of the jail functionaries to the cell, which was soon crowded to excess. Then it was that a scene ensued, for the elucidation of which we must again have recourse to the pages of the *Causæ Celebræ:* —

"Then the fearsome oldwife, having filled the place with these God-fearing men, did, of a sudden, fall into an

ecstasy, whereby she cried that she saw 'smoke arising out of the earth;' and many who looked on trembled lest they see gods coming up, like the terrible woman of Endor did make to appear, only nobody did see these things; so they let her alone to her speaking, which was in this wise: First, she did espy a mail coach, which, stopping at the sign of worthy Master Jones's inn, (the Green Dragon,) did let down a woman, young and fair to look on, with large, brown eyes, and very fair hair, and a mole no less sized than a sixpence on her right cheek.

"Then she cries that she sees the woman doth carry a bundle, and goes up many stairs, which she, the witch, did count; and in after time the number of those stairs being right, and her never having been in Master Jones's inn, did cause no little wonderment.

"Then she cries that she sees in that room, where the phantom woman enters, no longer a woman, but a young sailor lad; and she spies on his cheek, too, a mole shaped like a sixpence, and also that he had brown eyes and fair hair; and then she falls a screaming and crying out that she had met that sailor lad on the night of the murder in a deep wood near the Grange, and asking the way of her own very self; and at this the people ask what should follow; but the witch says nothing of the *fearsome deed*, only that now she sees the fair woman again with the mole on her cheek and the bundle in her arms; but this time she is coming out of the Grange, and she looks paler than before, and her lips are very white and sticky. Then the murdered man's brother asks her what that woman with the mole carried, and the witch, making as if she would untie a handkerchief, declares there is a suit of clothes like a sailor's, a little pistol, and a knife with the point broken off; which thing striking the minds of those who

remembered the point of a knife which was found sticking in the corpse, did cause them to lend a strong ear to the witch wife's story. But when she cried out again, with a woful tone, that the sailor's clothes in the bundle were spotted with blood, all did exclaim, and sigh, and shiver like a gust of wind in a forest of leaves. Then up spake the chaplain, and, forgetting all his dread of sorcery, he says, —

"'Now tell me, goody, what does the woman do with the clothes, and where does she go to herself?' Whereupon the prisoner, looking again into the air, albeit her eyes are shut, doth respond, —

"'Go search the pond that lies in the midst of Dingle Dell, and there shall ye find the bundle, pistol, and knife. See, see! she sinks it; and there, she hath four large stones in her hand, which she ties on to the bundle, and so it goes down heavily; but search and ye shall find it — search and ye shall find it even at this hour.'

"Then, being questioned again about the woman with the mole, she stops a long spell all silent and a-dread; but waking up, she points to a corner where nought yet appeareth, and says, 'She is there! I see her now, and she is looking at pictures.' And being asked what pictures, she says, 'It is picture money,' which thing meant bills, for she described many pictures like bills which were found in the dead man's pocket, and stood for money of divers foreign lands. On being asked to reckon up the money, she does this too with surprising quickness, and counts up as much as seven hundred pounds in king's money, which young Edward, the murdered man's brother, declares was little short of the great sum which his brother should have had to bring from sea with him; whereat all present were much astonished. Then did they ask, and she tell, the

room, and the street, and the number where the fair woman sat counting the picture money; but she could not tell the town, only it was near the sea, and had many shops with sailor's clothes in it. Then those that were present were discontented; and the poor old witch became sorrowful, because, says she, 'To-morrow she will go in a great ship across the sea, for she comes from a far-off land, and speaks with a foreign tongue, and there she will take all the picture money for which she killed William Rookwood;' and then she weeps and falls a-lamenting because it was a foul deed, for that he, the murdered man, had loved her, and had given her much picture money before.

"Then these good and merciful gentlemen, not willing to take away the life of any fellow-creature in wanton mistake, did strive to obtain the king's respite till such time as they could search into this wonderful thing; and though they feared the glamour that came from her lips, yet did the reverend chaplain quiet them by thinking for them — and he, trusting in God, did not fear but that truth might come in a vision, even as in the days of the prophet Jeremiah."

Here we quit the pages of our ancient authority, and though strongly tempted to follow out the quaint and ingenious details by which the men of law in those days ferreted out the hidden mysteries of crime, we must fain skim over the succession of wonderful revelations which the clairvoyant had brought to light. The sum of all was this: Searching the pond in Dingle Dell, and finding a bundle containing a suit of sailor's clothes stained with blood, a pistol, and a broken clasp-knife exactly corresponding to the steel point found in the deceased lieutenant's body, the eager authorities, now wild with excitement, and abetted by crowds of people from all quarters of the land,

pursued their inquiries with equal vigor and success. The coach which had stopped at the *hospitable* doors of the Green Dragon on the night of the murder, and at the hour described by the clairvoyant, was ascertained to have come from Portsmouth, and contained *but one female passenger*. Upon questioning the guard and coachman, they testified to the fact of her carrying a bundle, having a large and remarkable mole on her cheek, and presenting altogether such an appearance as the seeress described. This was enough. A woman, who had come there on a certain night, attired herself in sailor's clothes, visited the Grange, and afterwards sunk those clothes, stained with the evidences of murder, in an adjoining pond — an array of evidence which soon became amply substantiated. Then commenced the search for the fugitive; and tracing the stage-coach female passenger, as having come from Portsmouth, the clew as to street and number was followed up as given by the clairvoyant, and found accurate in all respects — too accurate, indeed, for though such a woman as has been described had lodged there, had absented herself for a day and night, and was actually traced from Portsmouth to the village of Rookwood, in exact accordance with old Hannah's story, it was found that she had indeed left England (in verification of the prediction) for the West Indies, and had sailed many hours before the arrival of the officers. Once in the right track, the vigilance of justice was enabled to trace the whole mysterious thread of the murder with accuracy.

William Rookwood had, it seemed, formed an intimacy with a woman of some personal attractions, but unparalleled wickedness. Being insnared by her wiles and artifices, he had foolishly intrusted her with the knowledge that he possessed a large sum of money in foreign bank

bills, and that he intended to proceed to the Grange, expel its present hapless occupant, and dispense his wealth in its adornment and repair for the use of his infamous paramour. The latter, revolting, it would seem, from the prospect of a settlement so ill in accordance with her vicious life, determined to appropriate her unfortunate lover's wealth, even at the cost of his life. Her plan of action was found to have been organized with equal cunning and cold-blooded determination. She had borrowed a suit of clothes from a poor lad of the lieutenant's own ship; and as this boy was even that day to proceed to the Grange in attendance on his officer, she had clearly designed to implicate him in the event of any one's seeing her in her disguise. After a long, patient, and most exciting investigation, this singular trial terminated with the arrest, confession, and execution of the real murderess; the actual restoration of the stolen property, which was found in her possession, to young Rookwood; and the honorable acquittal of the noble and self-sacrificing Hannah, who had so bravely condemned herself to an ignominious death, rather than the awful charge of fratricide should remain unexplained against her foster child.

My tale is ended; the two last and only personages whom this wonderful history concerned, were permitted to return once more to the mansion of death and mystery — the crumbling ruins of Rookwood Grange. The last representative of that fallen house — poor Edward himself — entered his paternal dwelling with none of the joy and satisfaction that a redemption from an ignominious fate warranted. During the excitement of the last few weeks, his young face assumed the impress of long years of care; his fine brow was marked by the furrows

of suffering, which no subsequent calm could eradicate. In the pangs of shame and grief the day-spring of his youth had evaporated, and a weary, spiritless lethargy seemed to dull the faculties which had sustained him through his bitter moments of public strife and struggle.

Ah, what a woful picture did that desolate pair present when they once more stood beside the cold hearth of old Hannah's poor parlor, the dark oak flooring of which still bore the darker stain which told of shattered life and unrepented crime!

The sailor's clothes were threadbare, ragged, and neglected; his once bright curls hung in thick mats over his pale brow, and the dim eye and sunken cheeks claimed a pitying glance from the stoniest look that met his; he had bound a bit of shabby crape round his cap, in lieu of his once gay gold band, and he now reverently held it in his hand as he stood with the thick falling tears coursing down his thin cheeks, gazing at the ineffaceable stain on the floor. Clinging to his side is the still erect and noble form of his foster mother. To see her now, no eye could trace a shade of difference between the Hannah who had been scratching her strange memoirs in that very room weeks before, and the neat, well composed, though patched old figure, that now stood gazing with more than a mother's fondness at the desolate heir of the Grange. "Willy, Willy! O, my brother!" cried the unhappy young man. "Would I had died for thee!" Then, burying his face on Hannah's knees, he knelt down and wept bitterly, while a voice, soft, low, and scarcely distinguishable from the breeze which sighed among the ivy of the ruin, whispered, "Be comforted, my brother; there is *no death;* and the separation of soul and body is but the passage from earth life to heavenly eternity, and does

not sunder any affection which is of the *spirit*, and not the *body*."

"Angels are around us, mother, and I *feel* my brother's spirit. O, why can I not behold him?" cried Edward.

"Canst thou see thine own soul, my child? Yet it is the same to-day as when it shall pass away from its mortal tenement. The soul can only be changed by the projection of its good or evil tendencies into thought or deed. Dost thou not see, my Edward, that there is nothing in the chemical dissolution of the atoms which compose our clay to change the soul within us? That invisible essence, receiving its stamp from the deeds of a lifetime, cannot be changed in the one moment which suffices to liberate the spirit from its casket."

"But yet, Hannah, if I could but *see* him!"

"I do," replied Hannah, calmly, "because my physical organization is clairvoyant; *you* cannot, because you are not so constituted; but again, I ask thee, child, if thou wilt deny the existence of thy own spirit and the influence of thy own mind, because thou canst not see, feel, or hear it? Thy brother bids me say, then, Wilt thou also deny the existence of God, the presence of the stars when the clouds of night obscure them from the view, the radiance of heat, and the piercing intensity of cold, because neither is palpable to our external sight?"

"Dearest friend, you are ever right," murmured the unhappy Rookwood; "but, my brother, can *you* see him, Hannah? And has he no message for me?"

"Ay, love, and, by his brightly beaming eye, one of love and consolation."

The seeress was long silent; then, bending low, she whispered in Edward's ear messages of love, and hope, and joy, such as the angels of our heart's affections come in

their tenderness and beneficence to breathe forth from the throne of the divine Father to his suffering ones on earth. Edward Rookwood was comforted — comforted beyond the empty sources of human happiness; he drank in the knowledge of that life to which we are tending, and his spirit brother became his pilot to the bright land of souls, warning him off from the reefs and shoals of crime, and while showing him, by his own bitter experience, the terrible shipwreck which he had made of his own spirit by his vicious life of earthly indulgence, he pointed him to a thousand bright blossoms growing on the shores of eternity, which it is given man even in his earth career to gather. O, thrice-blessed lamp of spiritualism, which shines in the darkness of the tomb over the fathomless waters of eternity. Welcome back, ye beloved ones! ye who have taken the tremendous leap in the dark, and now return with your angel whispers to counsel, and guide, and, by your angel light, to illumine, what we once called the dark valley of the shadow of death — what your experience has proved to be but a step, a mere onward footprint, in the vast highway of progress. Long did the young sailor linger amidst the ruins of the old Grange, and deep was his satisfaction to perceive that, by the wondrous manifestation of her mysterious gift on the side of human justice and retribution, poor old Hannah excited no longer a loathing or terror, but a kind of undefinable and awful respect, which he felt sure would at least insure her from molestation from the neighboring villagers on account of her singular faculty of clairvoyance.

For some time after the trial ended, the poor captive had been actually "lionized," and invited by many learned *savants* to come and be made a subject for their scientific experiments. Rejecting every offer, however, that threat-

ened to break the chain of what she deemed her obvious destiny, old Hannah once more took up her residence at the scene of her life's fatality; again the ivy and the solitary old woman fluttered round the crumbling ruins together. Edward Rookwood was gone — gone on his last voyage; at least tradition (which is ever circumstantial in its detail of *facts*) assigned him a foundered ship and a watery grave. Of his actual fate I have no more data to found on than a little poem, the last production of poor Hannah's pen; it was found with her manuscripts, or autobiography, many months after Edward's departure from Rookwood, when the village mourners assembled to lay the form of the seeress beneath the vast elm which shaded the painted oriel window of what had once been the library. The poem was eagerly perused, and many copies made in memory of her whom in life they had persecuted as a witch, and in death were ready to canonize as a saint.

They laid her within the shade of the ivied walls with which her own humble life had been identified. This was her last and only request, and it was made with many apologies for the trouble she would cause in the gratification of her heart's dearest petition. It was proposed, in the excitement which her dying fame awakened, to erect a monument over her resting place; but the wild March winds, which roared in their majestic harmonies a requiem over her lonely grave, formed for themselves a fitting monument of her heart's love and their giant power. Turret and bastion, tower and hall, were levelled in one shapeless ruin by the desolating hand of the storm-fiend in a single night, and morning found the shivered elm and the scattered ruin piled up in a superb mausoleum over the spot which covered the mortal remains of the Last Tenant of Rookwood Grange.

MANUSCRIPT POEM

Found in the Ruins of Rookwood Grange, on the Demise of its last Tenant, Hannah Morrison.

A MOTHER parts from her sailor boy;
Her lone heart knows no hope or joy,
Although he cries, "To my native shore,
O mother, I'll soon return once more."

Long hours and days are gone,
And years roll on; yet still no word
Of comfort cheers the mother's moan,
Till one stern voice is heard.

Weep on, weep on; thy sailor boy
Is gone to the land of hope and joy:
Lo! he sleeps 'neath the wave on a foreign shore,
And he'll now return to thee no more.

That cold, stern voice has falsely shown,
For sorrowing hearts are ne'er alone,
And, wafted from the spirit shore,
The loved and lost return once more.

And the lone one's sailor boy
Is near, and ever hovering round,
And fondly whispering in her ear,
"Weep not! thy child is found.

"An angel is thy sailor boy;
From lands of hope, and love, and joy,
He comes to say, though life is o'er,
He now returns to part no more."

LIFE: A FRAGMENT.

'TWAS night on the wild, stormy ocean. A noble ship heaved and struggled amidst the tossing billows which broke on the tremendous iron-bound rocks whose dark forms upheaved on one of the wildest parts of Northumberland. A thick pall of impenetrable blackness shadowed the wild waste of waters, lifted only by fitful gleams of the forked lightning. The demons of the air were shrieking in chorus to the hoarse booming of the mighty waves, while the roar of heaven's artillery broke in strong and awful cadence to the voices which made up the great hallelujah of the tempest.

At times, amidst the crash of elemental strife, another and yet more appalling sound broke through the burdened air; — 'twas the heart-stirring cry of human agony — the tones of plaintive voices pleading with the God of the darkness and the storm for life — life! the precious boon of life! There were many doomed souls tossing in their ocean grave that night; for at length the dying ship, after many a gallant struggle, shivered and parted, and slowly yielded up her own last breath in the crushing arms of the mighty billows. Her noble crew and despairing passengers were launched into the boiling gulf of the trackless waters. None heard their death-shriek — no human eye saw them die — beheld the tossing arms madly grappling with the

black air, or the writhing forms and staring eyes battling for life amidst the white surf which dashed them on the rude, pointed rocks near which they had been wrecked.

And yet, high over all the dreadful sounds which made up the requiem of that ship's crew, two persistent wailing voices pleaded still for life. They were passengers on board — an old man and a young and very fair woman. The former was very rich, with a noble name and high descent. He was going home, after years of painful toil in foreign lands, spent in heaping up wealth enough to redeem his old ancestral house and lands from heavy mortgages, and to dower the fair and haughty lady who accompanied him (his only child) with an estate equal to the proudest nobles of the land. O, how dear life was to these wealthy and aspiring great ones of earth! and how frantically they sought to avert the destruction which was little or nought to the "common people" around them, but became so very terrible to those who had lived only in the hope of the very hour which threatened to crush life, and aim, and purpose, all in one overwhelming destruction!

Ere the threatened danger was consummated, they had rushed from one to another of the hardy crew, and striven to prompt them to some special exercise of their strength to save *their* lives.

"You shall have gold — heaps of gold — whole piles, bars, ingots, if you will but save us," they cried.

"Your gold is of no avail here," replied the stern master; "it will neither splice a rope nor lash a spar. Prepare to meet your God, or see if you can bribe him to work a miracle with your gold."

"For the sake of that fair and high-born lady," whispered the old man to a noble young seaman. "Think!

she is the daughter of a peer of the realm; she can confer honor and distinction with her lightest smile."

"Honor and distinction are words which have no charm in the realm of old ocean," replied the sailor. "If I *can* save, with the sacrifice of my own life, any of this doomed company, it will be yonder unmurmuring humble woman, who clasps her infant so heroically to her breast, and asks of God life for her babe — no safety for herself."

"Take all — take every thing, — the hand of a peeress, — the wealth of a millionnaire, — houses, lands, rank, station, — only save our lives!" shrieked the despairing passengers, while the sullen and disgusted crew turned away to make their peace with God and prepare for entrance into that kingdom where rank and wealth have neither name nor place.

The last signal-gun had sounded; the last crash and dying shriek had sent its lengthening echoes far across the restless wave; the moaning tempest had hushed itself into sleep, and the leaden mists of a heavy morning spread like a pall over the now silent expanse of the deep. The noble ship and her gallant crew had passed from mortal view forever. The secret of their fate was entombed in the fathomless depths of the ocean, to be revealed only when the sea shall give up the mystery of her trackless kingdom of death.

A fine boat's crew of daring men, whose generous hearts had responded to the awful signals of woe from the wreck, had ventured forth amidst the boiling surf, and shared the doom of those they sought to save. Three human souls were all that had escaped the general ruin. These were the leader of the boat's crew — a brave old seaman, experi-

enced in such perilous scenes — and the eager, selfish pair, who clung around him with a pertinacity which left him no alternative but to save their lives or sacrifice his own.

They *were* safe then — safe on land, too; and now, while the drenching rain fell on a wild and desolate coast, they had gained the shelter of the only hut which broke the utter loneliness for many miles around. And now they sat by the blazing pine fire on the old fisherman's hearth, but still beneath the shadowy wing of death. A wretched, wailing widow hung over the drenched and lifeless body of a precious companion, who had perished in the vain attempt to save the crew of the doomed ship. His corpse, now washed ashore to the very feet of the bereaved woman, had been conveyed to his humble home, and engrossed her only thought. The warm fire she had so fondly kindled to greet his return flashed in fitful gleams upon his clay-cold face, and the untasted morning's meal her loving hands had prepared, stood like a ceremonial offering, waiting for the mourners to feast in honor of the silent dead.

As the day wore on, and the shipwrecked "great ones" vainly sought for aid amidst the devastation without and the all-absorbing woe within, they first bethought them of offering some commonplace expressions of sympathy touching the uncertainty of life and the extreme satisfaction which the dead man must have felt in sacrificing his life for others.

"And what are those others to me?" replied the bereaved woman. "What are they to him? Had he saved a thousand such as you, they could not bring him back to life. Were you the monarch on the throne, your kingdom would be to me, or him, a poor exchange for life. O life, life! the only good, the only real possession! The empire of the globe is but a bawble when compared with thee!"

'Twas midnight, and still the widow watched the moveless dead. Her selfish grief enchained her to his bier, and the frail and delicately-nurtured lady, who, with dripping garments and sinking frame, had scarce withstood the action of the storm, the late terrific scene and present desolation, lay in a corner of the room beneath a thin old rug, while her distracted father hung in helpless agony over her evidently dying form. Suddenly the red glare of the pine torch became extinct, while a light, soft, mellow, and unearthly, diffused itself throughout the hut, and gilded the scene with more than midday power. A low strain of music, at first so distant that it sounded like an echo from another world, but growing nearer until it filled the whole chamber with delicious melody, crept over the listening ear, and stilled the mourners into silent transport. And now revolving mists floated around, first dimly shadowing every object to their view, then forming into a gauzy medium, in which they saw reflected a diorama of a scene more fair than mortal eyes had ever beheld before.

The fabled paradise of Persia, the Elysian fields which ancients loved to dream of, no fabled Eden ever was so fair as this most radiant landscape; while moving here and there were forms of light and joyous faces seen, whom each remembered to have perished in the storm. There was the patient mother with her smiling babe, the little ship-boy, and the captain bold, each gallant mate, and, last of all, they saw the strong, brave men who perished in the strife, to save the wailing, helpless, shipwrecked crew. The brave young fisherman, the widow's love, with free, bold step and smiling face, was there, and he it was whose soft, low speech was heard sounding from out the mist — the voice of one, rolling from an illimitable distance, and yet borne, free, clear, and bell-like, through the realms of space.

"What cheer, dear love, and worthy friends? what cheer? Why do you look to ocean and the grave? You will not find your loved ones sleeping there. Life cannot be crushed out. *We're all in life;* we've but exchanged our garments and our homes. Look up, not down, if you would fathom life. Look onward, and not back, if you would see its purpose. Man of noble name and sounding title, let thy daughter go; her thread of life can never be broken quite, but all thy wealth can never make it happy unless 'tis scattered far and wide to bless the poor and needy. Whene'er thy lordly rank shall prove a tree whose branches shadow humble ones and lowly, then will it prove to thee a palace fair, when in the land of life thou find'st it planted. The lady's beauty will outshine the stars when in the homes of life 'tis decked with goodness. Thy wealth will plant for thee a golden Eden if in the hearts of suffering ones 'tis sown; but bind thee in its golden dungeon-chains, if in thy selfish soul alone 'tis treasured. Life on the earth is seed sown in the ground, to ripen into poison-weeds or blossoms, here in the land where souls first learn that life may be the subject of a mighty change, but never of destruction.

"Companion — love — look up! Lo, every soul that breaks its prison house of clay becomes a guardian prop to its own loved one's steps. The turmoil of earth's fitful fever o'er, the spirit first knows life — sees in it consequence of act — becomes the atmosphere of those it loved, their whispering counsellor, their mind's interior strength. Value this earth-life only as a means — nor death the end, but simply as the gate through which thy friend becomes thy angel guide, thy Father's minister to lead thee home."

The vision melted, and the dying girl, borne by the angels home, oft whispered low, when moonbeams silvered o'er her father's head, "Father, come home; but bring

with thee the wealth of widows' blessings, grateful orphans' tears, or else the life we prayed for is a wreck, more terrible unto the soul than death or ocean grave."

The widow trimmed her home and lit her fire, and oft she cheered the shipwrecked stranger's heart. Her spirit-love she knew was ever near, for soul never died; and "*earth-life's but a means*" to lead her home where life in truth begins, and shipwrecked mariners find port at last.

MARGARET INFELIX,

OR A NARRATIVE CONCERNING A HAUNTED MAN.

NOTE.—After perusing the manuscript of the following narrative, (which was placed in our hands by a third party,) we were in doubt whether the authoress intended it as a romance founded on facts, or whether she intended to represent the extraordinary incidents which it sets forth as having *actually* and *literally* taken place. We have since, however, had an interview with Miss Hardinge on the subject, and she assures us that the incidents actually occurred in *every particular as herein stated*, she having received them immediately from persons to whom they were familiarly known; and, although she has suppressed names, through delicacy to the many surviving relatives of the parties who specially figure in the story, she assures us that the facts stated are known and will be recognized by persons in England.—*Editor of "The Spiritual Telegraph."*

"THE real and the ideal," who can draw the line between them? Who can say whether there be in reality a distinction between them at all? If the human mind be incapable of generating an original idea, then it follows as a necessity that there must be, *a priori*, a *reality* for the conception of every vagrant idea which the mind is capable of sustaining.

I shall not now offer any speculations of my own on this subject. The *discrete degrees* which exist between the psychological delusions of self and those produced by spirit impression have yet to be weighed and measured by a profounder knowledge of the science of mentality than any to which our theorists of to-day have attained. If the following narrative, which occurred almost within my own experience, will serve to set the *savans*, who determine

these matters so entirely to their own and other people's satisfaction, to reasoning on a subject so deeply interesting to all, I shall be among the number of grateful recipients of the benefit.

Some years ago it was remarked that a young clergyman of the Church of England, who had become highly popular in his vocation, manifested a remarkable pertinacity in refusing to accept of any settled "living," or confining himself to any given locality. His many accomplishments of mind and person procured him innumerable offers of lucrative and permanent positions; indeed, it could not be doubted that he might have attained to high church preferment, could he be induced to change his restless and erratic course of life. His custom was to go from place to place, and from church to church, offering his services to brother priests, and occasionally accepting a very limited engagement to do duty in some remote place; but even then his wandering spirit sought relief in exchange of duty with every clergyman in his neighborhood.

This singular conduct, and the stern silence which he maintained as to the cause of his eccentricity, naturally drew upon him universal comment; and at length, that largest half of the world who so generously neglect their own welfare, in absorbing interest in the business of other people, decided, in solemn conclave, to fasten upon the young divine the following particulars: The first of these was, that he had been a poor curate, but had suddenly risen into wealth by an acquisition of fortune, none could tell from whence; secondly, that although he was universally courted, and esteemed the handsomest as well as the most eloquent preacher of the day, he was in manners and habits unsocial, reserved, and even morose, — living alone, and, as before stated, forever in a constant state of

change; while, thirdly, "in conclusion," and above all, and beyond all, it was remarked that, wherever he appeared, to preach, he was invariably followed by a lady, who, without ever being seen to speak to him, or hold the slightest communion with him, took her place at every service in some conspicuous position as nearly as possible in front of the pulpit. She was tall and graceful; her dress betokened better days, being of that kind of faded gentility which so eloquently speaks of the fallen externals of fleeting fortune and the changeless internal dignity of true breeding. It was impossible to judge of her age; for though her gait and manner exhibited the composed grace which marks the gentlewoman of any time of life, her features were entirely concealed by a splendid white lace veil of impenetrable thickness. In summer and winter, frost and heat, storm and sunshine, "the white lady," as she was termed, appeared in her accustomed place. Who and what she was, why she came, and how, were points which no scrutiny, however prying or persistent, seemed likely to determine. What was her connection with the young minister, was a mystery equally impenetrable with her veil. They were never seen to speak, nor did his eyes ever, in the whole course of the service, appear to turn towards her; on the contrary, he was noticed studiously to avoid directing his glances to the spot where she was; nor was he on any occasion recognized by the world as being in communion with her: and yet it was urged that some understanding, and that of the most direct kind, must subsist between them; for, however suddenly he might decide upon changing his course, even between morning and evening service, though the slightest incident might arise to alter his destination, and careful plans were often laid to practise thus upon him, it could never be dis-

covered that he either communicated with her, or to any one who could inform her of the course of his erratic movements. On the contrary, it was at length believed that the extreme care with which he strove to envelop those movements in mystery was caused by a desire to elude the vigilance of his mysterious attendant. If this was his object, the failure was certainly signal, for none ever remembered, during many years, to have seen Mr. H. preach without the presence of his phantom-like auditress.

Those who most narrowly scrutinized the conduct of this singular couple could detect certain evidences in the preacher's manner, that the effect upon himself, at least, was prejudicial, if not actually ruinous, to health, happiness, and intellect. Many who remembered the brilliant advent of his short career, were confounded when they considered how rapidly he had grown old, how evanescent had been the bloom and beauty of youth, how transient the glow of lustrous health on the cheek and brow. It was sad to watch the deepening furrows and wasting lines of cankering care, eating so openly into the thin cheek and pallid brow. The light of his eyes looked out from "the window of the soul" in troubled, fitful glare, like the eager search of an unquiet spirit "seeking rest and finding none." Nothing seemed to escape the rugged tooth of the hidden worm that was gnawing its way from the depths of his silent, suffering soul to the tell tale surface of the tabernacle, but the pathetic tones of his melting voice. A deeper cadence, a more passionate inflection, a more soul-stirring ring, like a well-strung harp responding to the touch of a master-hand, echoing to the chords of the deepest of human passions, were the elements which seemed to gather power and intensity with

Mr. H. as the presence of some unmistakable cause of internal suffering stamped its evidences in premature decay on other conditions of his organization. As the feeling of interest connected with the mystery that surrounded him deepened into sympathy, the preacher's popularity increased in inverse ratio to the probable duration of his ministry.

It was at a period, however, when the very oil of life itself appeared to be nearly expended, and the flame now flickering in its socket to be almost on the verge of expiration, that the minister was seen for several successive Sundays *without* his veiled attendant. At first the confusion which this fact occasioned in the minds of the various congregations among whom he was accustomed to appear, directed attention from the priest himself; but when the curious began to scrutinize the effect which this absence would have upon him, great was their astonishment to behold the very same phenomena in the conduct of the preacher which had invariably marked his manner in the presence of the unknown. There was the same anxious avoidance of a particular part of different aisles where the lady had been accustomed, as if seeking the most conspicuous possible position, to appear — the sudden, abrupt turning of the head away, which had so often given token that his eyes had involuntarily encountered a disagreeable object; nay, as he passed down the aisle to change his robe previous to the communion service, he was again and again observed to move aside and even gather it up, as if to avoid contact with what had once occupied a space now filled by empty air.

Many months passed away subsequent to the disappearance of the mysterious lady, without any other change in Mr. H.'s equally mysterious deportment than an increased

acceleration of that visible and rapid decay of physical strength of which we have before spoken. At length it happened that Mr. H. was solicited to visit a very distant part of the north of England, which it was supposed was his birthplace, but which he had never returned to since the period when he had left it, converted from a poor curate into a rich man. Mr. H. manifested an unusual reluctance to visit this place, and it was only at the earnest entreaty of a gentleman who had bestowed much medical skill and kindness upon him during a long fit of sickness, that he could be induced to comply with the requisition of the parishioners of Y——, to do duty for their rector during his temporary absence.

On arriving at the church where he was to officiate, his restlessness and uncertainty of manner became more than usually apparent. His furtive glances were perpetually directed towards an empty space directly in front of the pulpit, and the distress which he evidenced in glancing in that quarter was so marked that at last the congregation began to look as eagerly into the vacancy as himself. On passing the spot, too, to the surprise of all, he suddenly stopped, as if some one had addressed him, bent his head slightly, as if in acknowledgment of a communication, and, with an ashy paleness on his face, proceeded to the vestry room to change his robes. As he returned again to the altar, his unaccountable conduct, combined with the singular rumors which prevailed about him, broke through all the conventional forms which hedge in such a scene with a wall of strict etiquette, and the whole congregation simultaneously rose to observe his movements. Without paying the least attention to the rustle around him, he proceeded up the aisle with the same downcast look which ever marked his way, until he arrived at the vacant space,

when he was observed to draw aside his robe, as his custom had been when he had been compelled to pass in direct proximity to the veiled lady. Some wondered why he drew aside his garments from the viewless air; others pronounced it the force of habit; and some few wondered whom the preacher addressed when he murmured, as he passed the empty space, "*For the last time on earth, remember.*"

That day the minister had to spend with a venerable old man, who had once been an incumbent of the parish. He was a kind person, highly esteemed, both for his wealth and the noble use he made of it. As he returned to the manse with his reverend guest, he maintained a profound silence; but the moment they entered the door, he invited him to accompany him into his library, where the two sat down at the open window, as if for serious converse. It was a lovely autumn day; the woods and lawns were glowing in the rich, mellow tints of dying summer; tall forest trees shaded the painted Gothic windows of the still, calm retreat of learning in which they sat. The noble windows, open to the floor, looked out upon the silent resting-places of the village dead; the grassy mounds and moss-grown stones telling "the short and simple annals of the poor," while the deep stillness of the scene was only broken by the cawing of a colony of rooks, the solitude-loving yet noisy tenants of those spots most consecrated to mystery and repose.

After the involuntary tribute of some minutes' silence, which both gentlemen felt bound to pay to the presiding spirit of this peaceful scene, the elder commenced by saying, "Mr. H., it grieves me to be under the painful necessity of warning you that you are likely to encounter some opposition from claimants to the property you are now in possession of."

"Indeed," replied the party addressed, scarcely manifesting sufficient interest in the communication to turn his head from the open window.

"Yes, sir," rejoined the old gentleman; "the family of the late Mrs. F. I. have informed me, their uncle, of their resolution to dispute your title to the large sums you became possessed of in her name."

"The *late* Mrs. F. I.!" shouted the young man, springing up from his chair, and fixing on his companion a look which almost froze him to stone.

"Ay, sir," stammered the other. "Is it possible you can be ignorant of Mrs. F. I.'s decease, nearly eight months ago?"

"*Decease!* — eight months ago!" replied Mr. H. "Old man, you rave!"

"Now, sir, if I mistake not greatly, it is you who rave," rejoined the rector. "The unhappy course which my niece thought proper to pursue, in following you all over England, appearing in your presence on every occasion of your ministry, while life lasted, has stamped that life with too unfortunate a notoriety for me to question that you, or any one connected with her, can be ignorant that she expired eight months ago, and now lies not ten feet from the spot on which we stand."

As he spoke, he pointed to a slab of white marble, separated from the other graves in the quiet churchyard before them by a row of small rose-bushes, which were already beginning to form a hedge around the last earthly home of her whose remains they sheltered. The old man then proceeded to speak of the efforts which some one was making to dispossess him of his property; but Mr. H., without heeding him, rushed through the window, glanced hastily at the slab, on which was simply traced these

words, "Margaret Infelix," and turned wildly to his companion, exclaiming, "You, then, are Mrs. F. I.'s uncle, Dr. Masham?"

"I am," was the reply. "You knew her by sight?"

"As well as I know my own children. She was equally dear to me."

"And do you mean to say that you, in calm possession of your senses, will deny that you saw her to-day—saw her in the very centre of the aisle, standing the whole time, as it has ever been her custom to do, dressed as she has been accustomed to dress for the last eight months, in shining white silk, with a black instead of a white veil, and that for the first time since her dreadful persecution began, *she spoke to me?* My God, why do I ask this? You *must* have seen it; you sat close by; you might almost have heard her speak. Every one sees and hears *us* whenever we appear. All must have seen it—seen me, too, as I returned an answer to her."

"Will you permit me to ask what you supposed her to say?" stammered the rector, whose very lips were now becoming livid.

"She said," rejoined Mr. H., "'*We meet for the last time on earth.*' I felt so confused at hearing her voice, that I could not answer her at once, but overjoyed at the prospect of release from this dreadful persecution, I replied, as I returned, 'For the last time on earth, remember.'

"O, sir," continued the unhappy man, speaking with an impetus which proved that the dreadful secret, so long the incubus of his soul, now bursting from lips which had for the first time given vent to the agony of his overcharged heart, would come forth,—"O, sir, what a life of insupportable torture has this same most miserable wealth, of which you speak, cost me! In my humble curacy, not

many miles from this village, I lived happy and respected. I was betrothed to the woman of my choice, a sweet village flower, whose loveliness was her dower, whose purity and truth were the possessions which monarchs might have coveted. We were both orphans, and if the demons of ambition and avarice had not tempted me to aspire to loftier fortunes, O, how supremely blessed might I not at this moment have been in the possession of my lost Mary! O Mary, Mary! would I had died for thee! One fatal evening, when it seemed as if some new-born fire kindled up my Sabbath evening address into an unwonted torrent of inspiration, I was accosted after service by a distinguished and fashionably dressed woman, who appeared among us as a stranger. She asked me if I would share her splendid equipage on my way home, as she wished to converse with me. Under the excuse of needing spiritual advice which I alone was qualified to give, she formed my acquaintance, and soon drew from the sinless heart of youth the hitherto unfathomed aspirations of ambition and avarice, which were gradually developing in my heart. I soon learned that this lady was rich, high born, a widow, and to my utter astonishment I discovered that she was actually enamoured of the humble curate and his insignificant pretensions to village fame. I forbear to trace the process by which this terrible arbitress of my fate gained complete mastery over all my better feelings. The temptations of power, dignity, preferment, and wealth held out but feeble lures in opposition to my devoted attachment to my precious mountain flower; but at length I was weak enough to promise that if she would place her fortunes in my hands as a test of her sincerity, I in return would abandon Mary, marry her, and yield up my destiny to her guidance. For the riches I should thus attain, and the quick and lofty church prefer-

ment she assured me of, I was contented then to barter my soul to the fiend. When this woman first placed her enormous wealth at my disposal, I honestly declare it was my firm intention to redeem my pledge, and marry her; but alas! alas! who shall stay himself on the swift ocean of crime, when once his bark is launched? The sea of error is shoreless, and death alone can break the spell in its irretrievable pathway. The very hour I found myself in possession of the widow's wealth, I eloped with my first love from my native village. Alas, poor Mary! She was as innocent as the slaughtered victim at the altar of the means whereby I had so suddenly acquired wealth, and the reasons which urged me to insist upon a change of name and temporary concealment. Again I planted my foot on the ground, and vowed I would retrieve the past by a life of charity, usefulness, and devotion to my unconscious wife; and again the relentless magnetism of strengthening evil goaded me on to fresh crime. Scarcely knowing the use or value of the wealth I had abstracted, I squandered it in vice of every kind, in the pursuit of void excitement and lawless anodynes to bitter memory. When, after a few months of reckless and disgraceful extravagance, I found myself once more reduced to extreme poverty, I resolved to return with my poor, broken-hearted Mary to the homes of our childhood, and ascertain how far my character might have suffered in my absence, ere I ventured to endeavor to establish a little school. As my intrigue with my much wronged victim had been kept entirely secret, even from my wife herself, I had every hope that I should be enabled to retrieve the past, without any other penalty than such as I might have to pay to an injured woman's vengeance. Alas for me! If I could have foreseen what that was to be, I need have neither feared nor expected any thing more

terrible. One evening, just as I had completed every arrangement for my intended journey, I returned to the cottage where I had left my wife and a new-born babe, scarcely a week old. I returned to find the cottage and both its precious inmates a heap of ruins — consumed, as it was subsequently made evident, by an incendiary; both mother and child had perished in one burning wreck. When night came, and the crowd of sympathizing neighbors whom the horrible calamity had drawn around me had left me to my unutterable woe, a lady entered my apartment, whom, to my horror and shame, I recognized as Mrs. F. I. 'Edward H.,' she began, 'coward, traitor, and thief! I am yet but partially avenged — watching the favorable moment, *I destroyed your wife and child!* Seek not to arrest or convict me; the instruments who served me are beyond your reach; their safety and their silence are bought by a price which places them forever out of your power. Now learn your doom! Go forth and preach with lying lips, a seducing tongue, and felon's speech! Go forth and teach lessons of virtue and morality; but go where you will, do what you will, say what you will, *living or dead, I will never leave you more!* Till the hour of doom, when we *must* part forever, these lips shall never address you by word or token, but my *presence* shall be your continual shame, the sight of me your everlasting torment, and the consciousness of that presence a fire which nought but the death of *both* can quench.' O, sir, you never can imagine how fearfully that awful denunciation has been visited upon me. These eyes have never beheld her face, that tone of doom has never again sounded in my ears until to-day; but the horrible consciousness that she was there, the certainty that I could not escape her, the hideous prescience by which she seemed able to divine my

most secret plots to elude her vigilance, and ever present her appalling presence in my path at every turn, the almost supernatural power with which she enfolded me in her dreadful atmosphere, has been like the aroma of a thick and deadly poison infused into my very life principle, or a shroud drawn between me and the light of the sun, whose terrible veil can only be rent by death."

"But, most unhappy young man," replied the rector, whose heart was deeply moved by this strange recital, "you have been freed from this presence for the last eight months; it is enough that Mrs. F. I., my niece, expired suddenly of a fit of apoplexy in this very house; that I myself pronounced the funeral service over her remains, and that her absence from your path has been the theme of as much comment as her presence used to be."

"It may be so," murmured the young man, after a pause; "none ever dared to speak to me or question me on the subject; none, therefore, would converse with me of her absence. Her name was a secret; none would, therefore, apprise me of her death, if it were known; but when you tell me she has ever been absent from her accustomed place, *that she was not there this morning*, and did not speak the words which I have repeated to you, you ask me to discredit that which has been as palpable to me as the light of yonder blessed sun is to you. And now leave me; on this grave I would say a prayer, the first my heart has yearned to breathe for many long years."

His request was complied with; but when the rector returned some hours hence, alarmed by his protracted absence, he found him lying concealed beneath some bushes at a little distance, cold and lifeless as the marble by his side. The old man aided to bear him to the house, sighing as they went, "At last then he is — Edward Felix."

The newspaper account of the finale to this tragedy announced that "the spectre-haunted minister" had suddenly died of apoplexy; but none of those who knew the details of his strange history were ever able to decide whether, for eight long months, the veiled lady whom the minister saw was the real or ideal Margaret Infelix.

THE IMPROVISATORE,

OR THIRTY LEAVES FROM LIFE HISTORY.

INTRODUCTION.

THE world scarcely estimates the service rendered by those who have unlocked the gates of sensation by the revelations of science and the resources of art: and yet it is to the clear perception of things which we obtain by the study of Nature's laws, that we are enabled to appreciate her many varied gifts, and the answering chords within our own hearts, which make music only when we know how to combine sweet tones into harmony. Thus we owe to the study of poetry a recognition of poetic tendencies in our own natures. The complex and almost infinite science of mathematics revealed in the arrangement of sounding music, opens a wealth of sensation to the student unappreciable by those who have not reached its profound depths. The sciences of geology and astronomy are but keys which unlock the cabinets of infinity in space and omniscient wisdom in order, while the instructed mind every where feels the clew of first principles to be the birth of some latent gift within, which could never be externalized but for the primal revelation of its existence.

The world's acceptance of modern spiritualism is an especial illustration of this position. Who has ever recognized the tangibility of its facts, without perceiving that it

was but the solution to a problem that had had a world-wide and infinite existence? The understanding spiritualist receives the phenomena as nothing *new*, but simply as an explanation of that which had hitherto existed without an explanation; hence the science leaves the facts precisely where it found them, but removes the sphere of their agency from unknown to known causes — from the world of supernaturalism to the realms of law and nature.

The following passages from the life of one whose history would appear as an insoluble problem, except in the light of modern spiritualism, I offer to the world with a view of showing how intimately the phenomena repudiated by the *savans* of the world for their strange aberrations from natural law, have in reality been underlying all the familiar phases of that life which derives its chief beauty, excellence, and ascension to higher unfoldments from the constant yet unrecognized ministry of the inhabitants of another world.

The leaf I have thus torn from the book of life history I shall take leave to remodel in the shape of my own speech, and illustrate with my own sentiments; or, more properly speaking, with the light with which a certain dearly loved demon, manifest to me in the form of a voice, and to the eye of many a seer as a bright particular star in human shape, flitting around me ever, counselling, sustaining, inspiring, and warning me, until the flower of my own thought takes the hue and shape of my precious familiar's wider and more spiritual vision, enables me to present many a tale to the public which good Mr. Coles, in a late letter to the *Spiritual Age*, pronounces as "evidently composed in a normal condition." Of course he *knows* this, as he asserts it thus positively.

Dear spirit companions! it little matters to the world

whether it can estimate the highly-prized boon of thy low breathings of inspiration, or no. *I* rejoice in them, and that is enough for me. As an honest teacher of the philosophy which I have been thus far practically instructed in, I am bound to tell the whole truth, as it is presented to me; and whether I encounter the scoff of the sceptic, or the blustering censure of the ignorant, the fact remains unchanged; and the silent current of thy inspirational flow, my spirit friend, — best vein of my heart, — remains still my counsel, inspiration, strength, and warning!

Chapter I.

All the world (at least the operatic portion of it) remembers La Gabrielle. Within the last half century her history, if not the name thus given, — which I have purposely substituted for the real one, — has flitted through the giddy mazes of fashionable and artistic life like a blazing comet, distancing all rivalry by its brilliancy, and leaving in its swift and meteor-like track a memory as bright and fleeting as the shining phantoms of the skies.

La Gabrielle, the orphan child of a poor Italian musician and a French danseuse, had been in very early childhood adopted by a celebrated English actress, and by her trained as an opera singer. Endowed with rare beauty, and a voice whose wonderful power, compass, and sweetness marked her for the highest range of excellence, every charm which artistic training could confer upon such natural gifts combined with her protectress's care to complete an artiste who, on her very first appeal to public favor, gravitated, by virtue of necessity, at once to operatic sovereignty.

We first present her to the reader's notice at the age of

nineteen, as she sat in a sweet snug home in Brompton, a spot where the hum of busy London life melted away into the stillness of suburban repose and that luxurious tranquillity which the immediate vicinity of a great city, with all its appliances for comfort and convenience, admits of, when long, shady lanes, deeply embowered lawns, and wide-spreading, perfumed flower gardens intervene between the last aristocratic squares of the modern Babylon and the almost monastic seclusion of a choice suburban retreat.

Turning down the long, green lane, with its arching bowers of noble horsechestnut and fragrant lime trees, you arrive at a gate which leads through many a mazy turn in the midst of a cultivated wilderness of rarest flowering shrubs and choicest blossoms, statues, fountains, perfumed arbors whose deep stillness and thickly-curtained foliage suggest immeasurable distance beyond, and carefully trimmed hedge-rows whose cunningly contrived windings resolve the really small domain into an appearance of great space and extent, until you arrive at a succession of lawn-like terraces adorned with classic vases of choicest plants ascending to the open French windows, whose gorgeous hues of many-tinted glass cast the sunlight in rainbow glory upon the fairy-like summer parlor within.

Cottage and garden, boudoir and lawn, were all in keeping, and all eminently artistic, beautiful, and replete with the appliances of taste and luxury — choice books, pictures, and musical instruments every where proclaimed the inmates' sympathy with art. A fairy palace it was, needing but the sunlight of an illuminated soul to make it a reflection of the homes of the blest. Half shaded by the clustering roses and star-eyed jessamines that trailed their perfumed wreaths over the entire front of the house, and,

swept by the summer air, lay in masses on the very floor of the drawing room, stood a couch whereon was stretched the mistress of this fair domain.

We have said La Gabrielle was beautiful; and the portraits of the operatic queen, with their wealth of sunny, chestnut locks, deep violet eyes, long lashes, and dewy, peach-like cheeks, would bear to all beholders testimony to our record. Those, however, who have beheld that slight but exquisite form, and that wondrously mobile face, irradiated by the power of genius into living embodiments of the poet's and musician's most graceful imaginings, declare that mortal woman never yet impersonated so fully the unspeakable perfection of that beauty whose highest attribute is its nameless response to the soul!

Fancy her now, as the sunlight, seemingly imprisoned in every thread of her golden curls, lights up her beautiful home, so entirely in keeping with her beautiful self; but fancy what you will, and you never will arrive at the reality which we with the mind's eye can even now behold, and reproduce to you, my unimaginative reader, not as the image of what the externals of so much excellence would promise you, but as what the internal really fashioned, namely, a petted, spoiled child of fortune, actually unhappy because she had nothing to find fault with.

By her side, deeply engaged in the mystery of knitting, sat her quiet, gentle protectress. Long since removed by Gabrielle's brilliant success from the necessity of laboring in her old vocation, Mrs. Martin was now a retired actress. Gabrielle worshipped her; but as she was the nearest person just then upon whom the wearied beauty — flattered and almost idolized into selfish petulance — could discharge her weight of ennui, she had been laboring, with an assi-

duity worthy of a higher aim, to awaken the imperturbable composure and good temper of the matron into some sympathy with her own restlessness.

"Mother," she cried, for the twentieth time within an hour, "you have no sympathy with me. To be condemned to act with that great gawky creature, with his big Italian eyes presuming to admire me, and his horrid coarse falsetto, like a consumptive fife whining out *Anima mia* — O, it's heart-breaking! And if Signor Luigi does not find me another tenor for the new opera, I'll flit off to San Carlos, and break him up for the season. Now what say you to that, mother?"

"Say, child," replied madam, quietly — "that it's no wonder poor Pasco admires you, because you know every body does that; and I have no doubt but if you say it's best to go, that it is so."

"O mother, do listen!" cried the beauty, in a paroxysm of disgust, as the remote sound of a street organ reached her sensitive ear; "is it not dreadful that I should be driven from my peaceful home by these shocking itinerants? Mother, do you hear? I tell you for the hundredth time since this room was fitted up for me, now quite one week, that I shall either have to change my boudoir, or be driven in a foreign land to seek a home where these cruel grinders are not allowed to disturb the calm of a sensitive soul."

"I fear, my child," replied Mrs. Martin, quietly, "that you must not go to San Carlos then. Your poor father, like yonder grinder, doubtless came from Italy, where he, like other lazzaroni, sang his first way into public notice in the streets. You will have to flee a long way, dear one, to escape the appeal of the poor wanderers plying for bread in the city streets."

"I am a fool, a brute, an ingrate, dearest, kindest mother!" sobbed the impulsive creature, springing from her couch and falling at her friend's feet; "and I do indeed deserve this reproof; and I'll — I'll — I tell you what I'll do, mother; something better by way of atonement than spoiling my eyes with tears. I'll go and beg the man's pardon and give him a shilling." So saying, and without waiting for her more sober companion, who, putting aside her work, prepared to follow her, with a view of preventing some display which she knew by experience any new change of impulse might call forth.

The fair Gabrielle darted through the window, and very shortly found herself leaning over the green wicket which separated her dwelling from the unfrequented road. Here, however, a fresh sound changed the current of her purpose, and one which vibrated in her astonished ears with scarcely less emotion, though with very different effect, than the noise of the organ-grinders. This latter had passed from the scene, and in his place the tones of a man's voice sounded in the road, fuller, sweeter, and more deeply pathetic than any to which even this experienced artiste had ever before listened. He sang a wild, unfamiliar strain, but one which, in the cadence of his magnificent voice, struck like an echo from another world on her keenly susceptible soul. Riveted to the spot, she never even moved her eyes in search of the singer until the song was ended, when they encountered the gaunt form of a ragged and most woful-looking itinerant musician. His pale and haggard face was nearly concealed by a thick mass of black beard and hair, from out of which preternaturally large eyes gleamed like coals of fire. He held in his hand a little instrument of the lute kind, and this he played with a skill in harmony with his voice, which produced tones scarcely to be expected from its rude appearance.

Never did heavenly strains issue from a more unpromising looking source; but Gabrielle's disappointment was changed into absolute terror as the gaunt creature caught sight of her; and, springing forward with a wild cry of "Eulalie!" attempted to take the fair hand with which she had half opened the gate. Her action of fear produced a corresponding movement in the singer, who, after gazing at her for one moment with the most piercing scrutiny that the human countenance is capable of, humbly retreated with a murmured apology in the Italian language. Addressing him in the same tongue, Gabrielle requested him to continue his singing; and strain after strain of the same wild, unfamiliar character the stranger poured forth, while the entranced artiste, sated wi[l] all that the refinement of culture could produce, fairly forgot the earth on which she stood in her excessive delight; indeed, she was only recalled to herself by the voice of her mother, as she termed her protectress, suggesting that as the poor stranger looked weary, and the heat of the day must render the dusty roads oppressive, he had better follow them to the shady lawn, and partake of some refreshment.

With a deposit of the first few shillings that ragged doublet had known for many a long day, and the good cheer of a meal of bread, meat, and milk, the grateful singer readily accepted the ladies' gentle invitation to seat himself beneath the shade of a wide-spreading oak, and indulge their curiosity and interest by a recital of his antecedents. His father, though an Italian born, had been a soldier in the hated Austrian service. They said he was a brave man; but he died ere the singer had learned to love the father as he did his memory; but of the widowed mother, with her lone cottage in the depths of the far-off mountains of Calabria, her tender love, her precious coun-

sels and gentle teachings, how much he told them! He had an uncle, too, a venerable priest, with whom his mother dwelt.

The patriarch of a wild and savage district, mostly composed of forlorn or desperate characters, the old priest he represented as a home missionary from the very courts of God to shepherds, herdsmen, and bandits, who, without his self-sacrificing life, passed in the midst of such rugged scenes and persons, could never have heard holy word or pious prayer. Here, in the free air of vast mountain ranges, with no other companionship than his gentle mother and reverend uncle, the singer had spent his early life — sometimes supplying the humble home with the spoils of his daring sportsmanship, and sometimes whiling away the hours in tending the meagre flock of goats, which was the chief wealth of the scanty household. While the hill-side and deep ravine reëchoed to the strains of his wondrous voice, the rude population scattered about in these regions had learned to listen and admire with such a fervid appreciation of his fascinating gift, that they had been accustomed to assemble together at stated times to hold a musical fête, and drink in the tones of melody which none but the vibrating chords of Italian hearts could truly respond to.

There, on the purple mountain tops, with the wide range of glittering Alpine peaks for a temple, with the crimson glories of the sinking sun for a dome, and the far horizon of a blue Italian sky for a canopy, the strange, uncouth figures of the mountaineers, with their picturesque costumes, swarthy features, and wild, flashing eyes burning with the fire of passionate enthusiasm, kindled up by the delicious strains of their mountain minstrel, held their sacred harmonic meetings in the holy and regal halls of

Nature. Sometimes their "echo of Paradise," as they called their singing idol, chanted to them stories of the glittering stars, or the silent, loveless moon, while the Italian summer night spread out her shining page of revelation for a song book. Sometimes the tinkling of their guitars kept chorus with their leader's lute, while the graceful peasants, with bending forms, flitted in mazy dance beneath the moonlit sky, like the guardian spirits of those airy heights. More commonly, however, the one precious voice filled the space like the prince of air, till the first faint streaks of sunlight pointed with rosy finger to the dial-plate of another day. Then would they part — the peasant with full heart dedicating purposes purified by the holy influence of music to the patron saint of the coming day — the bandit, with choking sobs, vowing a life of penitence to the blessed St. Cecilia, which the very next hour saw dedicated to the spirits of rapine and murder.

A day came when the rich tones of the mountaineer were heard, for the first time, in one of the grand city churches. His uncle, the priest, being called upon to assist at a requiem, had tendered the young man's services for the choir. An enterprising operatic manager was present, claimed the prize, and, under the promise of educating him, carrying him to all the cities of the world, and, by the exercise of his voice, cultivated by celebrated masters, securing an immense fortune, which the young mountaineer was to come back and lay at the feet of his beloved mother and uncle, he was finally lured from his free mountain home, and self-bound a musical apprentice to the wily speculator.

At this part of the narrative the speaker's voice became strangely husky. "My mother! — Home, home, my mountain home! so far, far away!"

Bitter sobs told the whole story of the parting scenes with far more force than any words could have done. His listeners wept with him, this poor child of the Alpine mists, and in fancy beheld the old priest and the forsaken mother, their forms melting away in the remote mountain gorge, waving their last farewell to the wanderer. But why this abject poverty — this desertion? Where was the master? Dead — gone down in the fatal wreck which befell the Santa Cecilia one sad night, when on the iron-bound coast of that England which was the home of the manager, all but two of the crew and the poor mountaineer perished.

"I heard their death-shriek," he said, "and, above all, the wild wail of my only friend. It said, 'Farewell, earth, home, Ernest, forever — forever!' as clearly as ever human tongue could speak."

"Santa Cecilia the ship's name? Yours Ernest? Then your master was Jerome Luigi?" murmured La Gabrielle.

"'Twas so, my lady; yet how should you know?"

"My manager was his brother, and has told me many stories of the wonderful tenor singer whom his brother and partner had found in the mountains, and was bringing home to educate. His death and the sad details of the wreck are incidents familiar with us all; but we thought you had perished with the rest, and it is now three months ago. Heavens! you have, then, been begging your bread since, I fear. What hardships you must have suffered! A long sickness, the rude hospitality of a poor fisher's hut, and his subsequent efforts to sing his way to that London where he confidently hoped to make his fortune, was the conclusion of the story, while Gabrielle, in frantic delight at the romance of the adventure, and admiration of the vocal prize she had captured, despatched messengers in all

directions to find the master's brother, Signor Luigi, the impressario of the royal Italian opera of which herself was the prima donna. Then finding her protégé considerably elated by the sudden and brilliant change of fortune which had dawned upon him, she requested him to favor her with a repetition of the first air she had heard him singing.

"Give me a subject, Signorina, and I will sing you any thing you please; but I cannot repeat my songs, for I never sing twice alike," was the reply.

"How!" cried La Gabrielle. "Do you then compose as you sing?"

"Yes, madame."

"And the poetry?"

"It is hardly worthy of that name, madame," he replied, modestly; "but when the sentiment is fixed, the words seem to come with the air; and both come I know not from whence, unless it be that Santa Cecilia sings to me, and I echo her song."

"Why, this is better than all!" cried La Gabrielle, in an ecstasy of triumph. "At last I have found a real improvvisatore!"

Chapter II.

Three weeks had elapsed since the gaunt stranger, with the voice of heaven, and the inspiration of a Santa Cecilia, had warbled himself into the good graces of La Gabrielle, and been by her consigned to the tutelage and protection of Signor Luigi, the worldly and successful impressario of the Royal Opera Troupe, of which the far-famed prima donna was the absolute and most capricious autocrat. The hour was evening, and the beautiful artiste had just re-

turned from Paris and the bewildering homage of imperial salons. Once more we find her seated in her fairy bower, amidst its trailing jessamines and dewy roses; but this time the still moonlight and the holy stars shed their visionary lustre on marble image and flashing fountain. The liquid notes of the pathetic nightingale poured a flood of melody through the clustering myrtles which embowered the villa, while the otherwise solemn stillness of the sweet summer night harmonized strangely with the almost unearthly beauty of the fairy creature, who sat gazing forth at the enchanting scene, with an air of (for her) singular abstraction. By her side stood a tall, aristocratic, but singularly repulsive looking man. From the curl of his dark mustache to the tip of his shining boot, he had the perfect air and contour of a finished gentleman. His voice was beautifully modulated; every syllable, fashioned into conventional refinement by educational training, fell on the ear like the distillation of a double refined gentleman. We might pause upon the tip of his Paris kid glove, and discourse a whole chapter upon the inimitable fashion of his eye-glass, from each of which spoke out *peer of the realm;* but when we declare that he was none other than the Earl of Ravensworth, one of the oldest, richest, and proudest of England's hereditary (not natural) lords of man's (not God's) creation, have we not said enough? described him in full? And this cold, proud, magnificent aristocrat — this bit of human china which had laid itself up on the shelf of supreme insolence and lofty conservatism, as too precious to be served up on any thing beneath parliamentary or royal tables — had actually taken itself down, and offered itself up a humble suitor at the shrine of the still more potent dominion of fashion's idol — the all-admired opera queen.

Lord Ravensworth had now been the unsuccessful wooer of this superb prize for upwards of three years. Accustomed to *buy* or *command* female favor, he had brought all the batteries of wealth, flattery, fashion, &c., to bear, in the hope of placing the Gabrielle in his cap of conquest, as a plume in the tiara of gallantry; but during his long efforts to render the prize worthless, himself had surrendered his liberty, and the cold, stern, selfish heart which had hitherto been swayed only by fashion, and the narrow ambition of reducing a hitherto invincible garrison of talent and virtue, had at last bowed beneath the sword of the universal conqueror; and to his rage, shame, and dismay, he found he loved — ay, actually loved — some one better than himself, something better than rank, station, wealth or place; and that that something was the very being he had so vainly striven to humble; and so, being sole master of his own estate and fortunes, in the desperation of the sole passion which his selfish nature could ever entertain, he had at length become the humble suitor for her hand.

Gabrielle was as ambitious as the peer, and fully as proud. She detested the man, but adored the *nobleman.* To be a countess — take precedence of every one of the proud patronesses who stooped to caress the petted flower, which, unsunned by success, they would have trampled beneath their feet; to blaze in the royalty of courts, and flit over the world as its mistress, no more its slave — these were splendid images upon which her peculiar fancy, or some part of it at least, loved to dwell. Yet she must punish the insolent who had dared to traffic for her at any less price than the coronet of a countess; and with one scornful refusal after another did she finally incite the concentrated passion of the haughty peer to swear, that, come

[illegible] death, by fair means or foul, she should be his, and [illegible] only.

Gabrielle had heard of this oath, knew her power, [illegible] with and secretly rejoiced in it; but by one of those mystic spells in which the unseen world sometimes [illegible] its invisible word of power in the captive human [illegible] Gabrielle had that night, in the deep stillness of the [illegible] and under the influence of a languor in- [illegible] of a recent journey, solemnly pledged [illegible] to become the wife of the [illegible] He had pleaded for a shorter term [illegible] Twelve more months of the [illegible] sovereignty was all she [illegible] but the demand was imperative. And now [illegible] and each, silently revolving their rela- [illegible] forth into the beautiful [illegible] in [illegible]-disturbed mood. And [illegible] before their eyes, crossing be- [illegible] like an eclipse over a [illegible] with awful, sullen [illegible] and as large, dim mass [illegible] spread over the [illegible] it shut out the [illegible] from the realms [illegible] and the daily breath passed like [illegible] through the summer air. [illegible] gone, they saw it not in substance, but felt it in [illegible] they knew it had been there; and knew, too, that [illegible] fingers had drawn the mystic veil of the future [illegible] brief moment, and enabled their prophetic eyes to [illegible] hideous phantom of an unimaginable woe in its [illegible] horizon.

[illegible] should be especially happy this night, Gabrielle,"

murmured the earl, "and yet I feel strangely sad; 'tis perhaps my utter unworthiness to appreciate the boon you have granted me; or it may be the weary probation to which you have condemned me; or what it is I know not; but for Heaven's sake, sing to me. Your voice would dispel the darkness of Tartarus itself. Sing to me, Sappho of our modern Græcia."

"I have no heart to sing to-night, Edward," replied the lady. "The very same gloom seems to oppress me; and if I could be sure that stern Fate had an embodied life and human form, I should say she was this night standing near me, crying, 'Woe to Ravensworth! woe to thyself!'"

"Idle dreams, my Gabrielle; visionary as your own fantastic beauty. We *make* our own future; there is no such thing as Fate."

"We are the *tools* that carve our own future, I acknowledge, Edward," she replied; "but whose is the hand that wields us I have not yet determined. I know I have a will within me, but I never yet have been able to define what that *will* is. Impulses so strong that they force me into action before I well know what I am even going to do, have made me all my life a mere machine. I do not think or plan, I do not reflect, as others do; but a springing thought within seems to waken up my power of motion for no other purpose than to use me as the instrument of some unseen volition, and lo! the deed is done, or word spoken, ere Gabrielle, *the actor*, knows herself has done it. Is this myself, or Fate?"

"It is your own impulsive nature, child," chimed in the sweet, kind tone of her adopted mother, Mrs. Martin, who had risen from a distant part of the room, and now joined them; for be it known to American readers, either the matrons of England think so highly of their daughters'

charms, or so meanly of their lovers' honor, that it is deemed *impolitic* or *dangerous* ever to leave a young couple alone; and therefore good Mrs. Martin, like every other prudent protectress in her place, always remained in the room with her charge. I have heard it repeatedly claimed as matter of congratulation, that certain noble wooers were never suffered to be alone with certain humble *fiancées*, until the irrevocable knot was tied, implying either that the world was greatly given to slander, or *virtuous* maidens and *honorable* suitors only needed the opportunity to be the opposite.

"Gabrielle, you are either acting under impulse perpetually," resumed the matron, ——

"Or else under the direction of some other will than my own, *madre mia*," interrupted the singer. "What will is that which dictates all the glowing imagery of the poet's strain, crowding verse upon verse without effort to *compose*, or draw upon the material within? What speaks of unborn possibilities to the mechanic inventor? What suggests imagery to the painter and sculptor, whose *experience* cannot furnish them with the models they originate? What power carries the piercing vision of the seer into the yet unexplored future, and pours from the sibylline cup the ecstatic dreams of a nation's destiny, the fate of armies, the doom of individuals? Whatever power it is, mother, that casts the shadow of an immutable future upon every living soul in premonitions, prescience, and untried possibilities, urges on by its strong volitions us tools of its sublime power, as mere instrumentalities in the execution of its schemes."

"For shame, beautiful fatalist," replied her admiring betrothed; "this blind submission to what you deem manifest destiny involves something more than mere submis-

sion to Omniscient *Wisdom.* Remember, Gabrielle, there are such things as *evil* promptings, as well as good; and though these may appeal to the leading characteristics within, it were vain for us to be endowed with the *power* of discriminating between good and evil, if we are not to use it; vain the knowledge, if not to apply it; vain the possibility of improvement, if a blind fate governs us as mere instrumentalities, either to be forced upward or violently repelled backward. For my part, I deem the faculty to improve, and the constant suggestion or attraction to do so, constitutes the sovereignty of man, and defines the action of Omniscient Good. But enough of this; you speak of inspiration and fate as one and the same. I think them widely different — inspiration, as one of the agents of man's improvement, being directly antagonistic to that fatality which mocks at the possibility of progression; and by way of illustration I want you to tell me what you have done with that wonderful singing beggar you picked up some three weeks ago."

"Good Heavens!" cried the erratic beauty, clapping her hands; "why, I have forgot all about my poor improvvisatore. I gave him in charge to Signor Luigi to clothe, board, educate, and civilize; and, in strict expectance that he is to become the *primo tenore* of the whole world, I persuaded the poor savage to apprentice himself to the politic signor on the very night when we were all introduced to each other, just three weeks ago this very day."

"Gabrielle," replied her lover, "do you remember that my good uncle, General Kalozy, was wrecked in the Santa Cecilia, and only rescued by the noble efforts of one of the crew? He left the poor fellow sick at a fisherman's hut, and when he returned to seek him, found he was gone. Two days ago he told me, with unbounded joy, he had met

him in the streets of London, and that he was now studying to be an opera singer. You tell me your singing beggar was one of those saved from that very wreck; what if my good uncle's rescuer should turn out to be this very same hero?"

"General Kalozy, Signor Luigi, and Signor Rossi," was the announcement of a butler; and the next moment three gentlemen entered the room — the two first, the Hungarian (an uncle by the mother's side of the noble earl, and a highly distinguished old officer) and Luigi the manager, were known to and saluted by the whole party; but not until lights were brought did they recognize that the third comer was no other than the "singing beggar," now Luigi's apprentice — the brave youth who, in the terrible wreck so often alluded to, had rescued the Hungarian general at the peril of his own life, and now stood before the dwellers of the cottage so metamorphosed that not even the keen eyes of feminine scrutiny and tact could have recognized him. The rags exchanged for a plain modern suit, the shaggy beard for a small mustache, and the elf locks for short, thick, luxuriant brown curls; the white, thin, hungry face, radiant with health and strength, and the superb eyes, beaming with lustrous gratitude, compelled the whole party (under the influence of widely-varying sensations) to the conviction of gazing on one of the noblest forms and faces that was ever dignified by the name of man.

"Curses on the handsome vagabond! What brings him here?" thought the peer.

"How could that poor mountain mother part with such a noble son?" thought the gentle matron.

"I have found my *beau idéal* at last! — Ravensworth and the '*singing beggar*' — Beauty and the Beast!" thought La Gabrielle.

And so "*Beauty*" sang, as they desired him, strain after strain of his wild, but most delicious, melodies, till the night was far spent, and the listening stars looked down like pale worlds shivering in the dewy cold of the coming dawn, yet spell-bound to the wondrous minstrelsy that echoed through the sweet summer night, like voices from lovely, distant, unfamiliar worlds. "Beast" was silent, spell-bound, too, but cold, distrustful, unhappy. Was the shapeless phantom of the future sailing with its baleful shadow through the sky once more, that his heart was so chilled by the sweet singer's presence? O, drooping, white-winged Peace, wast thou a mere mockery whilst the song of hope but a few short hours before seemed chiming from thy pleasant lips? Where art thou now? Gone — gone forever! The home of Gabrielle will never guest thee more.

Many weeks elapsed, during which the rude mountaineer studied hard to acquire both the arts of civilized life and musical training. In the first he succeeded admirably. Poets, painters, and all children of intellectuality, are innately refined. Nature has made them gentlemen, and conventional training can do nothing more than impress them with external forms. The true artist can neither be rude nor vicious. The love of the beautiful is the shape in which good most commonly externalizes herself; but alas for the mathematical forms in which the cultured vocalist is to bind up the tendrils of his melodious fancy! Either some volition, exceeding in strength the power of the human will to curb, shot ahead of all instruction, or the poor improvvisatore was too dull to learn training at all Not one single strain that required memory to repeat — nothing, in a word, in the shape of repetition at all — could masters or friends impress upon the unretentive brain of

the disheartened student. No sooner would he strive to fix his mind upon the lesson which he *must* commit to memory, than this same unruly will, which Gabrielle considered to be so clearly under the control of some or any volition rather than her own, would fix his magnificent eyes upon an unseen, far-away horizon — kindle up the beaming face with the wild fire of ecstasy, and part the lips in unpremeditated song, which, although so provokingly unlike the lesson, would take every captive ear, and carry the listeners off to the dream land of inspiration, with which alone the strain seemed to have kindred.

Month after month did the puzzled masters of song strive to treat what they deemed a morbid case of vocal indisposition with all the nostrums of art and the iron fetters of stereotype science. It was nothing to them that delighted crowds hung on the strange minstrel's unpremeditated lays. Where Gluck, Cherubini, Porpora, had laid down the law, it was sheer heresy to delight the world by any other mode. There is a Bible in art and science as well as in theology, and this same Bible — this same terrible landmark, against which the floods of human progress would dash forever in vain — is the say-so of the fathers, the *ipse dixit* of some age so removed from the fair field of present investigation that an unreasoning faith is all that can bind us to it. It is the heaviest clog which can fetter the onward chariot wheels of unfolding thought; and never would it be endured but for the idle and degenerate habit of yielding up our judgment to any tyrannical usurper whose antiquity places it out of the pale of criticism, and whose dogmatic authority saves us the trouble of doing our own thinking. But the progressive element in man's nature is forever crying for more light; and whilst the spheres of inspiration are perpetually responding to the

demand, art and science contrive to knock over the professional flood-gates of conservatism and deluge the world with the waves of ever-advancing intellect. When art and science shall be recognized as the exposition of God's handiwork, the fashson of his laws, and hence assume their places as the handmaids of religion, theology will fare likewise, and the churches of conservatism will be found so narrow for the worshippers of Nature's (not priests') God, that we doubt whether any temple smaller than the whole earth will be able to contain them. And so Ernest Rossi could not learn singing as the ancients would have him, and did sing either under the tuition of angels of light or spirits of darkness, for such they are assumed to be who dare oppose the *ipse dixit* of antiquity, and move on with to-morrow's sun, until the hearts of all who heard him were melted into delicious rapture or kindled up into wildest enthusiasm. But if the masters were harassed, and the composers, in attempting to reduce to musical notation his impossible flights of vocal fantasies, still more so, how much more keenly did the poor student himself suffer under the crimping-irons in which they sought to fetter that which came and went like the mystery of the winds, subject to no control but the secret fire that burned within the altar of his own soul, and which (gentle as he was upon all other points, humble, patient, and teachable) he never, upon this one subject, even attempted to analyze. He sang *only* when the spirit of song in the mystery of his soul moved him to do so; and then he sang, in strains sad or joyful, wailing or triumphant, as the same viewless monitor gave him utterance. His voice, beautiful beyond expression, seemed to need no training to those who hung upon its exquisitely finished cadences; yet the professors, while claiming that the only object of tuition was to make

a voice full and round, maintained that Ernest's, the roundest and fullest that mortal melody ever yet animated, *ought* to be squared and angled ere it had the least right to be so perfect — in a word, they insisted upon right being wrong, unless they had made it so; and, despite the appreciation of a few passionate admirers, the ignorant teachers and the harassed scholar began at last heartily to concur in the decision that as he could only be trained by nature, he never could be a fit disciple of art — in a word, that he must choose another profession.

It was spring time now — the brightest, most hopeful season of an English year. Beautiful May, with her green lapful of flowers, and sweet hedge-rows laden with the perfumed hawthorn, was sporting playfully with cherry and apple blossoms, sending them in showers of pale pink bouquets tossing in the wanton air, as if in very child-like prodigality she scattered the fair things in their abundance; and when the soft twilight fell, and the last song of the blackbird and the low cadence of the delicious thrush sang the requiem of another dying day, rose triumphant in the midst of her starry court the glorious young May moon. She poured her flood of white radiance over hill-side and distant grove; streamed amidst violet cities into the remotest haunts of the fairy dells; pictured her face in ten thousand sparkling miniatures in the spray of the leaping fountain, and slept like the empress of night on the bosom of the moveless lake; but, O, fairer than all, shone her broken beams through the ruined arches where once the stately piles of Gothic pride pointed with cold monumental finger to the triumph of man — genius. There, on a tall and superb gateway, which once opened upon the courts of a now ruined priory, she fixed her eye of fire, and reigned in splendid pride, queen of the solemn

stillness. It was a pile of ruins at some few miles' distance from the opening scene of our story, and many a contemplative mind was drawn, by the love of old historical memories with which the place was rife, to wander amidst the lonely cloisters and crumbling arches during the hours when the broad eye of sunlight pointed the wanderer to secure paths amid its mournful relics. Few there were, however, who dared to hold communion with the legendary spirits of the place during the mystery of solemn night. Tales of ghostly monks and wandering friars had cast over the place an "uncanny" reputation. Flitting forms were seen, they said, moving up the long, dim avenue of stately elms which had once been the entrance to the abbey; and the sighing winds, as they swept through the broken arches, or moaned along the deep shadow of the still perfect cloister, were often laden with the wildering shriek which was supposed to come from the unquiet souls of the crumbling forms whose stone effigies, half effaced by time and revolutionary violence, looked grimly out of niches on the pale graves where their dust was laid. And yet, despite the traditionary clouds which wrapped the ghostly place in loneliness, two figures were keeping tryst within the broken wall that moonlit night. They sat upon a bank on which the fair primrose had spread her pale carpet of soft perfume, and the drooping ivy from the gateway above fell in wreaths around them like the frame of an arching picture. The rich mantilla of Spanish lace that was drawn around her head she now cast off; and as the moonlight fell on her snowy robe and lingered in the shining threads of her golden hair, Gabrielle — for she was one of the watchers — looked like the spirit of the shining orb above her head. By her side reclined the singer, Ernest Rossi; and while he gazed upon her with mournful, yet tender

admiration, there was something unusually cold, and even stern, in his kindly face. He was well, and even fashionably, dressed; and with the plasticity of his gentle and refined nature, had easily caught all the graces which must externally polish the gem ere it is deemed worthy to shine in the repertoires of fashion. The change in him, then, since ten months before he had stood, ragged, sick, and famishing, before the prima donna's gate, can scarcely be estimated; but deeper far was the change in the heart of his companion. For the first time in her young life she loved. Wealth, rank, ambition, all that had hitherto lured her on the road of life, had now become but idle gauds, compared to the luxury of listening to his dear voice, of gazing into his deep, soul-like eyes. Whatever of hidden depths were within that wild, impulsive nature had all welled up into this wealth of love for him. With a fancy brilliant and spiritual, and a nature which seemed to hold strange communion, or rather be under constant impression from an unseen world of power, Gabrielle believed she saw in this strange, visionary improvvisatore the human embodiment of that unseen world of which she dreamed and fully persuaded herself she was the tool. Yes, yes, Ernest was her fate — the incarnation of all her visions of beauty, genius, and a better world, and she would, *must* love him; "*her spirit compelled her — her human destiny alone rebelled.*"

Without any apparent effort to resist or yield to the unmistakable interest the fair cantatrice manifested for him, the gentle, dreamy singer seemed to occupy quite naturally the place she assigned him. Affectionately grateful for her kindness, delighted with her talent and beauty, and tenderly interested in her unqualified affection for himself, he loved her as much as — she sometimes bitterly

remarked — "a creature more of heaven than earth" could love an earthly being. On one point, however, they were entirely disagreed; and this it was that cast a shadow over his noble face, deeper than the frowning ivied tower that reared its sullen head above them.

Gabrielle was betrothed to Lord Ravensworth — openly betrothed — loved, idolized by him, and in the eyes of the world, no less than in honor, was pledged to become his wife in two months from the very day when they now met in secret, and therefore, as he, (Ernest,) the simple, generous mountaineer conceived, in *dishonor*. The capricious beauty, accustomed to manifest her imperial will without fear of opposition, had from the very first of their acquaintance exhibited an *apparent* reserve to the stranger, which only hastened the denouement of their mutual preference when they did chance to meet in their professional intercourse without witnesses, and Gabrielle had insisted that their mutual attachment should remain a secret until she herself found some means to break through her engagement with the earl. As yet she had manifested no such intention, however. The lynx-eyed world, of course, took its share in the thickening plot, and the nobleman's suspicions, once aroused, at length took the form of such frantic jealousy, and such terrible determination to retain Gabrielle to her pledge, that she assured her lover she felt her embarrassment, no less than terror, of the consequences perpetually retarding the open avowal which he required of her change of sentiments in his own favor. Sometimes he suspected, and not without good cause, that the world's idol, with her *heart* and *spirit* devoted to *love*, could not shake from her fancy the glories of operatic conquest, fashionable homage, and the glittering pageantry of a countess's destiny.

"O that she would be frank with me!" he would say to himself. "I cannot expect that my mountain home and my poor gain of little trade in goats can weigh against the splendid destiny which Ravensworth can offer her. They cannot make a singer of me; and, in comparison with these studied operatics, I am but a poor mountain vagrant. I am fit for nothing now, but to go back and sing to the brigands, and make them a little better with a holy prayer. But what a home to offer her! — a chalet made of pine logs, and an inheritance of mountain goats! Would, would I had never seen this London star — all too bright for me; and yet, O my Eulalie, star of my heaven home! even she is not fit to shine in the sky where thou art — where no mortal can match thee, if indeed, thou vision of my soul's brightest imaginings — if indeed thou art other than a streak of moonlight, or a wreath of mist!"

These were the thoughts with which the singer had kept tryst with the ardent and beautiful Gabrielle, the observed and admired of all — the form of the graceful mortal gliding with him through the gloom of the earthly way, and the imagery of some spiritual sublimation filling his mind, like the soul, captive within the human prison house.

Gabrielle's appealing eyes gazing up into his own drew his abstracted gaze from the starry heavens into which he had been lovingly gazing, and fixing them tenderly upon her, he said gently, but firmly, "Gabrielle, dear, precious child! you *must* be your own fate, and that on this very night; but first, beloved one, you shall be in a condition to judge; then in God's name will I call upon you to exercise God's highest endowment to humanity — the faculty of judgment. So listen, my star-beam, and hear thy recreant knight's confession.

CHAPTER III.

"GABRIELLE, can you remember your home? Ah no! I recollect — you have told me you never knew a childhood's home. Then, sweet one, you have never known what *first love* is. The spot of ground associated with your youth's earliest memories is the mistress of your heart. You may love again. Other scenes and other things — friend, lover, child — these may engross manhood's strong devotion; but the love of childhood's home is more nearly the love of self than any later feeling. Such was mine. There, where the first dawnings of consciousness were awakened, I either drew thought out of the surroundings, or else I so imprinted thought with them that the scene — each crag, and glen, flower, and brooklet — became a part of my very self. My home, too, was worthy of my devotion — so wild, lonely, yet grandly beautiful. Every shape of loveliness which Nature delights to fashion in other lands seemed here patterned out as if to heap up models for all her fantastic moods. Somehow the hills seemed grander there; the vast amphitheatre which their large black summits formed, loomed more majestic than in other places; the deep ravines and rushing torrents, all were lighted up with deeper sunlit gold; and never moonbeam fell on lake of more placid beauty, deeper blue, or fringed with grander woods, than this dear home, so well remembered, showed. One spot, more dear than all, was the rocky, outstretched arm of one vast giant mountain. No foot less sure than my firm boyish tread could have carried out the human form on such a dizzy ledge; yet when I had gained the edge, what

piles on piles of wondrous Nature's works I gazed upon! — mighty rocks uptorn from out their caverned depths, and cast like giant Titans heap on heap; such deep, unfathomed gorges, whence rose the sullen boom from hidden waters tearing their rushing way, far down within the awful depths below! On one side waving verdure, monstrous pines, and noble leafy giants, through whose green arms the wild winds sported in their boisterous glee, covered the mountain like an ocean green. Cast like the wreck of some late shattered world, over against the blooming forest hill rose up the bare ribbed rock in monstrous heaps, the highest ice-bound summits lost in skies as white and ghostly as their own pale heads.

"I wander, Gabrielle. All this wild scene, and more, more than the tongue of man, or pencil of the many-tinted painter's fancy could depict, my eyes would wander over as I stood from faintest morn ofttimes to dewy eve — from purple sunlight to his golden death. Forgive me, love; I'll strive to speak in simple prose. Gabrielle, believe as you will, or can, if I would seek some stray goat of my flock, — if I desired to sing some new wild song, to learn or know aught of to-morrow, or of life beyond my own small ken, to that wild mountain bridge, leading to empty air, I would resort, there sing a while, then wait, and lo! either the misty valley wreaths or some fantastic shadow of my brain would shape itself into the loveliest form which, saving yours, my mortal eyes e'er looked on.

"You smile, my Gabrielle, and think, if not mad now, I used to be; but 'twas not so. From earliest boyhood, one young and girlish form forever seemed to wanton at my side. At home or when my family were near, I felt it, heard its low, unspoken tone, but rarely saw it. In the aerial hall I've told you of, I've felt her, heard her,

seen her. Balanced like a rocking bird, on sunbeam, moonbeam, or cold ether car, she'd come to me, and face to face we talked, as *we* talk now.

"I *know* I was half dreaming; for, strange to say, I never questioned her or sought to know who or whence she was. I knew she was a spirit, blest and true; and this was all. I never knew when first we met, or how; nor can I recollect my mountain home or early life without her. She told me of the future; and I speaking oft her words again, — I knew not why, except I could not help it, — they called me Seer and Prophet. I called her 'Eulalie,' — I knew not why; and when I erred, her dreamy eyes, so sad, so unreproachful, yet so full of woe, revealed the mystery of her dear presence ever. She knew my inmost soul, my secret thought, my hidden ways, and spirit's wandering flight. She was my second self, or guardian angel; advised me, cheered me; taught me bright views of life, and brighter heavens; controlled my wayward fancy, guiding it to immortality's bright realms, to which I felt she had herself attained."

"What was this mist wreath like, dear Ernest?" inquired Gabrielle, for the first time interrupting the rhapsody of the improvvisatore, in a tone between jest and interest.

"One day," he rejoined, scarcely seeming to heed her question, "a young comrade, who had been a pupil of my uncle, the priest, and the only associate whom in my life I ever cared to call friend, came to revisit his old master, and our boyish intimacy was renewed. He was an artist; but the world's hard hand had dealt somewhat too rudely with a very fragile constitution, and, bending beneath the chill blast of consumption, he had come to our home of beauty and fascination ostensibly to seek health,

in reality to make his bed of death. To the poor pilgrim so rapidly nearing the visionary shores of spirit-land, I sometimes ventured to speak of what any one else would have termed my strange hallucination. I know not why he believed me so readily, but this he did; and I have since attributed it to the clear perception of spiritual realities, which I believe to be constantly pervading this dull, sensuous world of ours, and into which the eyes of the dying can so readily look. Yes, he believed me; and whilst I had the satisfaction of finding one ear into which I could pour the tale of my visionary but life-long association, the remarkable accuracy of my *sprite's* predictions, and the occasional low breathing of delicious music which in the long hours of night often rang through the chamber which he shared with me, soothing with its exquisite pathos the feverish unrest of the poor sufferer's vigils, convinced him that a something beyond my own human intelligence inspired my prophetic utterances, and made music in the lonely mountain when every mortal slept.

"Two days before he died, one balmy summer evening, I found him lying on the little mountain shelf of which I have spoken, and which no inducement of mine could before urge him to attempt reaching. By his side were his brushes and pallet, and to my amazement and delight, in his hand, drooping with exhaustion, he held a faithful miniature likeness of my fairy.

"'Take it, Ernest,' he said; 'it is my dying gift. Do not thank me; I am well repaid, for I too have seen her. She stood here in what seemed to me bodily presence before me—I know not how long. I know not how I came here, nor why I brought my colors. I know she bade me paint, and I obeyed her. My task is ended, and she in gratitude will pilot me across the unknown sea. She comes to take me home.'

"And so she did, my Gabrielle. When next I saw the phantom, my dead friend stood beside her."

"Ernest, for Heaven's love, what mean you?" cried Gabrielle. "Do you then believe the dead can reappear? and if so, could the phantom you describe have been a spirit?"

"Why not, Gabrielle? *Are not you one?*"

"O, yes, Ernest, that is true; but a spirit in human form!"

"Ay, but what *lives?* What is your life — your *form*, or *spirit?* If form, what then is death? If spirit, why should I not see the living spirit of my friend's dead form? The spirit, not the form, was my friend."

"I know not, Ernest," she replied; "but I do know our church says 'tis wicked — and the world, impossible."

"Your church does not say so, my Gabrielle. It teaches you of days when spirits walked the earth, and talked with men like mortals. When the world says it is not possible, it gives the church the lie, and talks mere nonsense; for spirits, not mere flesh and blood, make up the world itself."

"Ernest! I've often thought 'twas strange that God should permit for untold ages the world to dream of spirits, tell tales of apparitions, live a perpetual life of fear of spectral shapes, cling to the thought, the hope, the fear, or else belief in spirits, if all this were a fallacy. We only can deny it because it is not *proved*. By the same rule we cannot *prove* a God, an immortality."

"It *is* proved, love," replied the singer. "Whatever thinks, and gives this body life, owes not its being to the body. Death sets this free, and that being gone, the body has no life. My thought is not my brain. But injure *that*, you kill my brain, but cannot touch my thought. Why

should it not find organs better suited to its use than this poor clay? And when it's done with that, why not speak to you precisely as it now does *through* this clay?"

"I cannot argue with you, Ernest," replied the lady; "I *think* and *feel* you're right, but fear to use my reason lest I *prove* it true, and *proving that, prove more than my religion would allow.* Your words, however, only give expression to what I've felt, or, may be, dreamed of, all my life. The air to me is full of shapes. No creature approaches me but his shadow precedes him, sometimes close to him, sometimes a few minutes in advance. I see these shapes outside of every creature, and know who is coming near; and those who are going to die, I know by something which I can't express, but see it stamped upon their *shapes.* I do not speak of these things much; the world will not believe me; and yet how common is this power! Scarcely a village, town, or hamlet, but has some old muttering crone, supposed to be a witch, or shunned as evil, who converses with the air, sees shapes of persons, and on those shapes diseases, characteristics, and oftentimes events, which, proving true, prove also something, telling mind more than the body sees. The world believes this too, it is so common, provided you will only call it *strange.* But when you search for causes, they say 'tis 'superstition,' or 'illusion.' What is illusion? How grew superstition? But tell me, Ernest, what was your phantom like? Your friend, you say, could see her, and preserved her image. I'll be sworn that precious picture was not shipwrecked with yourself."

"It was though, Gabrielle, shipwrecked with me, but also saved with me; and now for the strangest part of all. Would you choose to see that face, my Gabrielle? Can you bear to look upon it?"

"Why not, Ernest? Can I be jealous of a sprite? Show it me. Of course you have it with you, nestling close to your heart."

"'Tis here."

"O Heaven! 'tis myself!"

The moonbeam, shining out almost as bright as day, fell full upon the picture which he held, displaying a face enveloped in misty wreaths, but unmistakably the image of Gabrielle.

Quietly returning the portrait to his vest, he replied, "Do you wonder why I started, Gabrielle, when I first saw you at your own gate, and beheld in mortal form the image of my fairy Eulalie?"

"I had a twin sister once, Ernest," murmured Gabrielle. "When we were both very little children, our poor mother travelled with us through those mountains where your home was. This noble woman, whom I now call mother, journeying with her husband the same way, found her and one poor infant perished in the snow. My hapless self still living, she took and warmed me into life. Since then I've been her own. Could I but deem the spirits of the dead, like mortal children, lived, and grew, and bore the impress of their earthly mould, I might almost deem your phantom friend my lost young sister's spirit; and yet I know not —"

And thus the lovers wore the hours away. The jealous, watchful eyes of Ravensworth were far away. Called suddenly on political business into the north of Scotland, he had not even time to set his usual espionage upon his unacknowledged, but not undiscovered, rival; and so this secret tryst was the longest and freest they had ever known. Both endowed with the powers at whose possession we have slightly glanced, — namely, of conversing

with a shape, a voice, a something whispering round them more than mortal ken could see or know, — they met this night, assured, by their strange far-seeing eyes, no danger threatened, no human foot was near.*

And now they spoke of subjects of much deeper interest, at least to them — their future. Gabrielle, whilst professing, ay, and feeling also, the most fervid affection for her friend, was so indoctrinated into the world's conventionalisms, that she deemed she should be drawing her lover to ruin if she allured him to any fate short of the wealth and fame which she at present enjoyed. She knew the desperate and fierce resolve of Ravensworth to call her his; she knew his power by rank and wealth to bring revenge the direst on the heads of all who should thwart him; and whilst, with an eye of habitual devotion for the world's gauds, she gazed upon the brilliant vista which he opened to her as Countess of Ravensworth, she regarded with equal terror the possibility of his vengeance thrusting herself and the fascinating object of her life's first love out of the pale of romance into poverty and disgrace. And yet she loved, adored, this strange, fantastic, gentle singer. For the first time she knew how sweet it was to love; and life without this love, and him on whom she poured it

* In a tale written some months since for the *Spiritual Age*, and entitled, as far as I can remember, "Second Sight," I gave a slight sketch of the prevailing popular opinion, or, as the phrase goes, "superstition," concerning that faculty, more recognized in Scotland, Wales, and Bohemia, than any where else. The condition called clairvoyance, or the capacity to perceive, with the spiritual eye, scenes, distant objects, and persons, which could by no possibility come within the range of the natural vision, is commonly defined as a perception of past or passing objects. I consider that the future is equally susceptible of coming within the range of spiritual vision. This faculty is common enough in England and many other places, where, however, it is orthodox to call it "strange," but heterodox to call it "spiritual."

with all the deep devotion of her Italian nature, could be for her no more.

After long and anxious speculations on these things, she had resolved for him a course of life to which she saw all things were clearly tending. Lord Ravensworth had an uncle, a brave Hungarian officer, his mother's brother, poor, but of noble blood. His son was now in England, a colonel in the same service, and one to whom Ravensworth had shown many favors. Gabrielle greatly disliked Colonel Kalozy; but when it had been found that the poor improvvisatore could not, schoolboy-like, accomplish the tasks set him by his masters, Lord Ravensworth, probably instigated by the hope of getting rid of him, and Colonel Kalozy, out of gratitude to his noble cousin, had both urged upon him the offer of a commission in the regiment of Kalozy. True, the service of the oppressed slave of Austria was neither very tempting in point of wealth or distinction; but the rank of ensign would be the sign manual of gentleman. This to Gabrielle was the first, best honor she craved for her humble lover, while to himself the possibility of striking a blow in the cause of freedom had something so much more ennobling in it than drudging in the service of a musical mountebank, who caught the wild notes of nature, and labored only to twist them into vocal gymnastics, that he had long seriously pondered on accepting what he persisted in terming the peer's generous offer.

Generous indeed it was! generous to himself at least, if not to poor Ernest Rossi. "Some one must kill that singing vagrant," reasoned the earl. "The sword of Ravensworth would be polluted by his peasant blood. I cannot descend to the meanness of secretly assassinating a thing so poor; so the Austrians shall rid me of him."

Telling his useful, pliant cousin of his will, Colonel Kalozy had a commission to offer Ernest, in token of friendship for saving the life of his father from shipwreck — a commission in his regiment; and all the glorious consequences of the noble warfare, which, either in the shape of speedy preferment, or honorable *and of course accidental death*, might be expected so naturally to follow.

And so the last pale star of night and first of dawning found the lovers striving to bend their eyes prophetic on their own next day. What should they do? Their love they could no longer hide. The politic earl affected ignorance; but Gabrielle only the more surely felt the rocking of the earth beneath the fair, smooth surface. She pleaded with all her gifts of grace that he would haste, like a gallant knight, to win his lady-love by deeds of fame and arms. This, she said, would give them time to think, himself a name and place in life, and both probation of their new-felt passion. He, *half a savage still*, murmured of peaceful home among his mountains, the tranquil day and sacred evening hymn; but silence closed his lips when he looked on her — so proudly beautiful, so worshipped, and so sought — such a lot for her! he dare not speak it; and so, with dim forebodings, and a plastic mind swayed like the summer grass by passing winds, he bade her cheer; he would go forth and do her bidding, be her minstrel knight, earn *fame* at least for her, if not gold doubloons. And so they parted that dear summer night, when in those few hours they had lived an age. Their hearts' deep secrets read, their souls unlocked, one fate, one hope, should now be common with them; and in that long "good night" they felt "we're one forever!"

Farewell, moonlight trysts and tales of love, for Ensign Rossi. New scenes, new hopes, companions, occupations.

He thought his dreaming days were over; and yet he was mistaken. Arrived at the scenes of active warfare and busy strife, engaged now in actual struggle for the golden game of liberty, the generous-hearted mountaineer cherished a whole legion of dreams, which waited on his every footstep, brightening and heartening up his weary way, companioning his long vigils and harassing marches, and lightening him on to an ethereal but glorious future, that, like an attracting point, kept his heart single and his purposes pure and lofty in the midst of all the license and corruption of a camp.

Let materialists pause ere they crush out the world of ideality from the ardent gaze of youth. What is materialism itself but a world of *seeming*? The smile, smooth speech, external act, and conventional fashion of dress, what is all this but the world mask to the spirit's hidden reality? Sooner let the impressional mind trust the involuntary revelation of what the world terms fantasy, prejudice, first impressions, than all the machine work with which the worldling hangs up a screen around the real motive power which nothing but intuition can detect. Sooner let the visionary trust to the bright phantoms which flit above his sensuous world than part with the hallowing influence which faith in the good and the beautiful ever brings.

Ernest dreamed of beauty, or else felt its palpable presence in the beautiful world of the unseen around him; and so he was gentle, graceful, loving, beautiful in thought and beautiful in act, in exact proportion as he felt the influence of beautiful surroundings. In dreams of chivalric deed, or it may be the inspiration of noble beings in harmony with him, he seemed to gather strength to act out noble thoughts; and though by nature peaceful, and even indolent, his name soon linked itself with generous deeds; his foot was ever

foremost in unselfish, daring enterprises; and notwithstanding the scanty field for honor and renown which an intestine struggle against oppression afforded, speedy promotion and high laudation heralded his name from place to place as one of freedom's champions.

It is not our purpose to touch on any of the political conditions of the time. We are simply following the fortunes of an individual, not narrating particulars of a party, cause, or nation. We know such a one as our improvvisatore took part, fought, bled, and suffered, in many of the bitter struggles in which an oppressed people armed for defence against oppression, or strove to break a chain too heavy for human sufferance. The man, and not the cause, is ours at present. They said his comrades loved him, and despite the promotion which his gallantry so rapidly insured, none envied or grudged the kind young man his honors — honors borne so meekly and gained so well, that love, not rivalry, seemed only possible with him. There was, besides his tender sympathy for suffering and friends, another quality that endeared him to his comrades; — this was his sweet, wild voice, and readiness to sing his wondrous strains, so full of soothing power. No hearts are so susceptible to music as those in whom the presence of danger kindles up constant excitement. Thus the sailor, soldier, captive, and mourner hang on the tones of music as an echo to the feverish throbs of their own excited hearts. At night, when they sat by the watch-fires, or laid them down beside the half-dug trenches which each felt might be his grave to-morrow, the minstrel soldier sang to them lays coined in the burning realms of inspiration. And never did trumpet's crash or clarion's shriek, shrill pibroch or "spirit stirring drum," wake to such martial fire, such warlike heat, or soothe the soul with half such tender calm,

as did the voice of the improvvisatore, amidst the camp-grounds of poor captive Hungary. Sometimes he sang of home and lady's love, and then the stern gray warriors wept, and noble young hands drew their glittering blades, flashed them in the moonlight, kissed the cross, and swore to die for her whose glancing form, evoked by the spirit of music, flitted amongst them, bearing their burning words like pledges to the courts of love and honor. How they loved to listen to his lays, these death-doomed men, forgetful of their fate whilst rapt in the air of melody! The common soldiers loved him, too, he was so kind, considerate, and merciful; and when he sang, they wept like little children. Sometimes he told of heaven and heaven's queen, and then the kneeling forms sighed out their hearts, in echo to his plaintive, low-toned hymn, "*Ora pro nobis*" — Virgin Mother, hear us!

Never did prayer float on the dewy night with deeper soul-felt pleading, than at those times when he — the soldier singer — thus prayed for them.

And where was Kalozy, Ravensworth's wily cousin? Why is it that evil deeds require greater nerve and more encouragement for their commission than good ones? Either it is easier to be good (as it certainly pays better) than to be otherwise, or the current of the world's opinion sets in so dead against cruelty and vice, that it requires a stronger mind to stem the tide than float with it. Kalozy either really liked his noble young subaltern, or else was afraid to harm him — afraid (when he saw the generous thing called popular opinion hanging so lovingly around the favorite) to injure that which never sought to injure another, and therefore, not meriting, seemed incapable of expecting, injury himself!

This was the state of things when one evening Lieuten-

ant Rossi was employed by his colonel writing in his tent. Kalozy sat at some distance, reading letters and dictating certain memoranda upon which the young man (who had received a fair education from his uncle the priest) was employed in transcribing. The night was warm, the curtains of the tent undrawn; suddenly a rush of balmy air seemed to pass over the brow of the scribe, and a dim shadow fell across the tent door.

"Eulalie!" muttered the young soldier; and for a moment an impulse to spring away, into the wide, wide realms of air, away forever, seemed to possess him; the next, the still, dreamy ecstasy of France; and then he saw Kalozy — who sat directly behind him — placed like a picture on his very table. He saw him knit his brow, contract his lip, and then, with a face all seamed with discontent, draw from his vest a letter, reading thus: —

"You have either mistaken me or betrayed my trust, friend Hermann. I told you I would have that beggar killed; and you send home, or suffer home to come, accounts of his wondrous bravery and prowess, until all those who read news of this war, and bulletins of your most cursed insubordinate rebellious country, begin to think the Italian organ grinding Ernest Rossi is going to turn out another Bonaparte, and convert a handful of beggarly Hungarian hordes, into a second imperial army.

"I know, my worthy cousin, it matters little to you on which side you fight. The bread that is the best buttered tastes the best to you, whether it be baked in Austria, Germany, or Hungary. Must I tell you again, then, that whilst I am paying you handsomely to do *my* work, that work is to get Ernest Rossi decently killed, and not made a captain and a hero of. Look at it, therefore; unless you can find a better paymaster amongst the Austrians, and as I am in more earnest than ever, the day that sends me home news of the death and burial of this interesting vagrant, shall sign the deed which makes you master of the long-coveted estate and manor of Wallingford. So now choose, and that without

further faltering, which you will serve, the God of battles who presides over the destiny of your hapless country, or the Mammon who has the honor of subscribing himself

"Your loving cousin, EDWARD RAVENSWORTH."

Twice did the visionary scene, passing *behind* the seer, recross his entranced eyes; and twice did the shadowy finger of the shining apparition in the tent door point, letter by letter, to the pictured page of the billet, which Kalozy was at that very moment perusing with his natural, and Ernest Rossi with his spiritual, eyes. When both had concluded the reading, the colonel put up his letter. The curtains of the tent slightly waved; a low, long sigh, like the night wind's wail, passed over the cold, damp brow of the seer. A shudder, a blank. He looked out into the camp-ground beyond. All was still. The stars were out for him, for *she was gone*. 'Twas mortal night once more.

"Colonel, have you nothing more for me to write? I await your orders."

"No more, Ernest, now. To-morrow I'll call on you again."

"To-morrow, colonel! Never again. Good night!"

CHAPTER IV.

WITH the egotism of human nature generally, we are apt to suppose, when we perceive, for the first time, some manifestation of the existing order of things, either that we have made a new discovery, or that we are the subjects of some special revelation. Such has been the view with which many of the investigators of modern spiritualism, magnetism, and clairvoyance have deluded themselves; whereas the fact is, that all these things, and many others

of the same character, have been the familiar practice of the ancients, and a constantly attending evidence of mental materiality in all times and in all places where the physical materiality of religion or science did not proscribe its study. On the continent of Europe and in countries where schools of philosophy have been established, these sciences, especially the two last, have been identified with every search into the curiously abstruse phenomena of nature. It is English and Americans *alone* who have not recognized their manifestations; and therefore their exhibition as portions of the phenomena of spiritualism has appeared as a new revelation of nature to them. The German, Bohemian, and French *savans* ridicule the idea of any new revelation in these sciences, while every nation of the East is familiar with their practice, if not with their identity with the agency of departed spirits.

Having said thus much, we need add no more in apology for antedating the *discovery of the application* of clairvoyance in America, by introducing scenes, the details of which are derived from *actual fact*, although the time, place, and names of the actors are all disguised in the license of fictional composition.

The moon was gleaming brightly over the camp-ground of the Hungarians, and picturing her fair face on many a gleaming bayonet point as the moveless sentinels returned the slight salute which Ernest Rossi gave them, passing from point to point ere he gained the remote quarter where he shared with a young lieutenant of his own age the shelter of a rude tent. The quiet scene, where slumbering masses lay outstretched in that peaceful rest which might know but one more earthly waking; the sight of so many groups of noble forms and gallant hearts all press-

ing forward to the mysterious portals of untimely death; or, it may be, the doom of dragging a mutilated form through the penance of a suffering life, impressed the kind heart of the young soldier with the tenderest sympathy.

"Would I could die for them!" he murmured; "or rather, would it had pleased the great Dispenser of life to teach men what a sacred thing it is! This frame, so wonderfully and fearfully fashioned, with such skill, ingenuity, and beauty, — why should this be torn and rent by tiger men, destroying what God has designed so well and nature has outwrought so patiently, — and all for the possession of a few feet of earth in this particular section of the globe? What vast waste lands are yet unclaimed which these greedy ones could possess! What wealth within the giant bosoms of yet unwrought mountains, with which they might enrich themselves, without this cruel butchery of each other — and all to satisfy the avaricious yet sluggard spirit which would rather steal another's possessions than toil to obtain them himself! Where are the spirits, too, of the slaughtered dead? O starry homes! they cannot enter you; they are not ready; earth has not yet done with them, nor they with earth. Their mission unfulfilled, some vast mid-region must receive them, the poor, unresting dead! Your tranquil, peaceful rest, O stars and suns! where happily spirits dwell, may not receive the waifs whom God has sent to earth to grow, unfold, and become fit blossoms for the gardens of eternity, but which rude man cuts down before the fruit is ripe, and crushes out of life ere half the work is done. Murder, — thou last, worst crime! thou greatest wrong the undeveloped soul of man can e'er suffer! — what sophistry can gild thee? what law of man's contrivance redeem the stain of foolish, useless, but irreparable wrong?

What fantastic names, as Honor, Patriotism, Fame, or Justice, can repair the hideous breach that murder makes in nature, or give back to God, who made it with such skill and care, the flowers of life, which men, like idle, spiteful children, tear to pieces out of mere revenge?"

"Ernest, Ernest, my child, O, save me!" Such was the wild, shrill cry that, three times repeated, clear, distinct, and close beside his ear, broke on the startled soldier's meditations — a pause between the repetitions. The language that of his native land, the tone unmistakably that of his mother, left him no room for doubt. Rushing to his tent, he aroused his sleeping comrade — one who, as friend and confidant of the young man's most secret thoughts, was well accustomed to the exhibition of his strange spiritual perceptions.

"Augustine, wake!" he cried. "Some terrible event befalls my mother, or like a sword impends upon our heads."

For several minutes his agitation prevented his resorting to that far-seeing faculty which he was daily accustomed to employ for the amusement or to satisfy the curious speculations of his friends. His companion, however, whose mind was well balanced and commanding, at length succeeded in soothing him, and after several ineffectual attempts to concentrate his powers for the exercise of his clairvoyant vision, he produced a letter which he had lately received from his mother, which he at last found was the one link wanting to bring him in rapport with her.

This letter contained an account of the death of her brother, the old priest, the breaking up of their little household, and the subsequent determination on the part of the poor mother to set out in quest of her son. She had received frequent and dutiful communications from

him, was appraised of his whereabouts, and resolved to join him. She had accomplished the greater part of her long and perilous journey, when she found she had entered within the lines of the much dreaded Austrian army. To avoid this, she had entered on a wild mountain tract, where she encountered the family of a noble Austrian, who was then in deepest agony of mind, vainly seeking to discover the retreat of some of the bandits so famous in those districts, who had recently carried off his young and only son. The gentle heart of Madame Rossi, deeply sympathizing with the grief of the parents, urged her to aid them by the exercise of her wondrously accurate faculty of clairvoyance. By this means the retreat of the kidnappers was discovered, and the precious child ransomed and restored to the arms of his kindred. In deeply grateful appreciation of the service she had rendered them, the Austrian furnished her with money and a safe conduct through the Austrian lines, on the verge of which she hoped to meet her son.

It was to this point that the letter to her son conducted her little history. What she could not tell was the dire treachery of the woman-flogging nation, who no sooner ascertained that a woman was in their midst, possessed of the wondrous gift of clairvoyance, and that she was alone, still young and very beautiful, than they, by some paltry evasion, contrived to fasten upon her the character of a spy, and, despite of her friend's pass, to detain her a prisoner. At first they sought to win her to their service by offers of large bribes and promotion for her son, if she would induce him to join their ranks; but when she found that the service required of her was no other than the exercise of her clairvoyant powers for the detection of their enemies' plans, she indignantly refused the treach-

erous part they assigned her, and by thus manifesting open antagonism to their interest, excited their enmity, and even in the mind of the base and cowardly general officer who had covertly detained her, as much fear of her strange gift, as anxiety to avail himself of it.

Colonel Kalozy had not been altogether mindful of his patron the Earl of Ravensworth's interest, moreover. The service of the Hungarian patriots was more remunerative in honor than wealth, while that of the Austrians was exactly the reverse. To reconcile himself to both, and appropriate, if possible, the spoils of both, he had long professed himself an *open* champion of the tattered banner of liberty, whilst he in reality acted as a secret agent beneath the golden standard of oppression. For many past months, it had been evident to the patriots that some undetected treachery was at work amongst them. Their best laid plans were thwarted, and their most secret operations so obviously under the espionage of their enemies that all their efforts were bent to discover the traitor.

Just at this time came missive after missive from Lord Ravensworth, insisting upon the destruction of the hapless minstrel. Availing himself of his knowledge of Austrian tactics, the double traitor, Kalozy, contrived to reveal some of their manœuvres to the Hungarians, and then apprised the Austrians that the secret had been disclosed through the instrumentality of the famous clairvoyant, whom the Hungarian officers availed themselves of, as he insinuated, to procure surreptitious information. Thus stimulating alike their vengeance and their superstition, Kalozy hoped that the indignant Austrians would save him the trouble of doing the executioner's work upon his young lieutenant; but when he heard the poor patriots, driven to desperation by the constant disclosure of their

schemes, propose to consult the occult power with which their favorite Ernest was invested, in the hope of detecting the traitor, he resolved that a speedy termination must be put to the terrible power of the seer. Just about the time that the hapless mother of Ernest fell into the hands of one of the Austrian generals who had long been dealing with the covert traitor, Kalozy, he himself, stimulated by the fear of discovery through the second sight of the minstrel, proceeded to terrify the Austrians by an exaggerated picture of his clairvoyance, and the preparations which a secret knot of traitors were forming, by the aid of the most diabolical magic, to destroy the whole Austrian power.

To buy the improvvisatore over to their interest had been the first efforts of the Austrian dupes of Kalozy in dealing with the poor mother; but when they found she was too inflexible in her devotion to the cause her son had espoused to make it likely that he could be paltered with, they strove, by promises of reward and liberty, to induce the exercise of her power as a clairvoyant to detect more of their enemies' schemes than they believed the wily Kalozy had disclosed to them. Still all in vain did they seek to threaten the noble Italian woman into aught that could injure the cause of liberty, and that through the agency of what both herself and her son considered as a special and sacred boon from Heaven. The gift of clairvoyance and inspiration neither made, nor even changed, the characters of these persons. Being possessed of it, they used it, as every human being does the talents intrusted to him, according to the predominating feelings of good or evil in his nature.

"Beatrice Rossi must die." The fond mother must leave her young son in the dark hour of danger, and the place of treachery.

"Virgin mother," she cried, "thou wilt be the solace of the orphan! God's will be done!"

Beautiful, gifted, still in the prime of an orderly life, the sweet and gentle woman longed to linger amongst the fair valleys and lofty blue mountains of glorious mother earth.

"There are fairer landscapes and more sunny skies in the land of the blest," she thought; "let me die rather than betray the noble and the brave." But when they told her her first step to obscure and lingering martyrdom was to be brought out in the light of day, and exchanging the shelter of her dark cell for the glare of a noonday barrack yard, with bare shoulders, and shrinking womanly nature, to be savagely *flogged*, in the presence and by the hands of *men*, her strong soul failed her. The whispers of angel comforters could not break through the murmur of her choking sobs; and fit after fit prevented her executioners from presenting her as a sufficiently edifying spectacle of conscious suffering under the lash, until twelve o'clock at night, when, with the very first hand that was laid upon her to tear her garment from her crouching shoulders, she uttered the wild cry of agony that sped through nearly a hundred miles of ether; and then, by the mysterious agency of the spirits of the air, thrice echoed in the ears of her unhappy son, "Ernest, Ernest, my child, O, save me!"

Reader, we are not telling you a story plagiarized from the celebrated case of the *in*-famous Marshal Haynau. Woman-flogging in Austria and Russia is not of so rare occurrence that we need harrow up your feelings by the recapitulation of a scene which the last ten years' experience has made familiar to Europeans, principally by the splendid retaliation which the noble London brewers in-

flicted upon the Austrian woman-flogger, even in the presence of his aristocratic entertainers. For more detailed account of this special case of modern civilization, consult the files of the London *Times* of about eight or ten years ago. The scene of which we write occurred many years previous, but perhaps, to some American readers, needs the citation of the familiar and recent case of the monster Haynau to testify that in Christian countries, and under the rule of a most Christian emperor, *such things are.*

And in the presence of his comrade, Ernest Rossi, under the influence of the far-seeing perception of clairvoyance, and bound like a victim to the stake beneath the spell of the mystic trance, beheld strong, savage men lash the frail form of the tender, loving being who had given him birth —heard in the wide conducting space the shriek melt into the low wail, the stifled sob, the long-drawn sigh, the deep stillness of unconsciousness; and then a presence, a dim, gray, shadowy thing stood beside him, in form like the dying mother, a pressure on his arm like the touch of the dead; a long, long distant echo, from a toneless voice, whispering, "Come to see me at L——stadt," and all was over.

In low, murmuring cadence the clairvoyant, statuesque and rigid beneath the magnetic spell, had rehearsed the terrible scene in the ears of his deeply-moved friend.

"Wake me, Augustine," was his concluding sentence. A few upward passes of his friend's hands, and the released spirit became lord of its earthly casket once more. Consciousness returned, and with it memory; and, O, what a dire and portentous consciousness was that which gleamed in the eyes of him who never till that moment had known an angry or uncharitable feeling! The savage hyena would have glared with less terrible fire upon its prey, than the

soul of the agonized man, for the first time awakened to the thirst for human blood and quenchless vengeance, gleamed through the lustrous eyes of the seer.

"Farewell, Augustine, I go to rescue or avenge my mother," were his first words. But he could not part thus, and that Augustine knew. Nearly a hundred miles intervened between himself and the scene of the tragedy he had witnessed. The road was lined with Austrian troops, and by daybreak of the morrow the command had been given to the *rebel* Hungarians, by their leaders, to advance to the taking of an important position which they confidently hoped to secure. This last consideration more than all the rest, together with the cherished desire of being permitted to lead a forlorn hope in the course of the engagement, finally prevailed in restraining the unhappy son from rushing off in the midst of all impossibilities to attempt the rescue of his mother, supposing that she should survive the shameful cruelties to which she had been exposed. And the morrow's sun shone down upon a dreadful field of carnage, in which no hand drew so red or reckless a sword as he who a few short hours before had mourned before moon and stars the destruction of a single human life.

"Lead us not into temptation." *Does God tempt us?* If not, what does? These are fearful queries, full of dreadful meaning too; for none can deny that the human heart, swelling with loving, generous impulses under the gentle rule of peaceful surrounding, has become, if not an absolute traitor to itself, yet so wildly fierce, so hard, relentless, almost savage beneath the impetus of opposite influences, that we again demand, by whom and why are we thus tempted? O, life! dost thou demand, for the evolvement of all thy purposes, that the secret depths of human

souls shall be sounded to their lowest fathom point? Can we never become strong, except by conflict? — victorious, until the enemy is wrestled with? Must we work out the tiger in our natures, before the lamb can rule? Festus says, "The safety of superior principles lies in exhaustion of the lower ones." If this be so, then, O our Lord, lead us into the battle plain of temptation, but give us but strength to conquer!

"For thee, my mother; another life for thine! another, and another!" All day long this fearful battle cry rang from the lips of Ernest Rossi, and with every cry his deadly sword struck out a foeman's life. There might have been a hundred Ernests in the field that day; and death in every shape the frantic soldier rushed upon; and yet it never touched him. His reckless daring wove a charm around him. Swords flashed and bullets whizzed above, beneath him; but all in vain — none touched. The word had somehow gone forth, that the celebrated Italian magician fought amongst the rebel ranks that day, and when men saw that slight young form, with cheeks of ashy white, and blood-shot eyes, whilst fury sparkled round his flashing sword, his single arm seemed like a spell of death to sweep around and scatter life like chaff, and all shrunk back aghast.

The fight, however, was but a succession of skirmishes, more deadly with this terrible spirit of vengeance in the midst, than such scenes usually are; but still not productive of any marked results on either side. The Hungarians had succeeded in one aim at least. They had sufficiently rid themselves of their persecutors to be enabled ere nightfall to resume a position from which they had been driven a few days previously, and in which they hoped to obtain possession of a most important military

station. A forlorn hope, to be led by Ernest Rossi, — "the magician," the now half frantic son, hopeless of rescuing his mother, but madly striking for revenge, and recklessly seeking death, — this was the finale of the terrible day which succeeded the clairvoyant revelation of the past night. And the red sun, sinking amidst billows of golden-crested clouds, glared on the redder field of death, like the eye of an angry God weeping tears of blood for the slain.

"For thee, my mother; another life for thine! another, yet another!" sounded out amidst the ghostly light which the pale moon shed upon wall and tower, as the dauntless young soldier, with his gallant handful, rushed on, over ladders of slain to the topmost stone in the breach. Another step, and the pass was gained. Already the sword of the avenger was high in the air — twinkling, starry worlds gleamed on its blade — death, death every where; more death when it falls; but with it, victory.

"For thee, my mother!"

"And for thee, foul wizard!" cried Kalozy, close behind him. With the word, a blow, a struggle, then a fall, down, down, over heaps of slain, wall, rubbish, broken arms, and senseless, in the very midst of the defenders, lay the dreaded seer.

"Traitor, have I found thee?" burst from the lips of Ernest's generous comrade, young Augustine. "For thee, my friend, my Ernest!" cried the noble youth, striking almost at random, but cleaving in the blow the very skull of the double traitor. Ernest was gone. No mortal arm could save him. The leader lost, the poor, dispirited few, who had so gallantly followed him, fled in confusion. Taking advantage of the outcry which the capture of the young lieutenant (grown terrible in reputation to the Austrians,

as a potent magician, through the misrepresentations of Kalozy) occasioned, Augustine kneeled down, and from the dress of the lifeless Kalozy extracted his papers, rightly deeming that he should find in these proofs of that treachery which, in the secrecy of their tent, his friend and himself had discovered through the former's clairvoyant perception. This done, all was over.

"O my friend, my Ernest! generous, gallant spirit! would I had died for thee!" broke from the mourner's lips, as turning from the now abandoned breach he proceeded to provide for his safety in retreat. Through the heaps of slain he made his way. The feeble cry of "Water, water, for the love of God!" from dying, parching lips, smote on his ear; and with it came the memory of times when his poor friend had bathed his fevered lips, tended his wounds, shared a soldier's scanty crust with him, and stripped himself of blanket, cloak, and coat, to shield him from the damp, cold dews of night. All his love, his almost womanly tenderness and care, rose up like phantoms dodging round his way. The thought of Gabrielle, the secret love, and that mysterious airy thing that played around him; the music that he made, so mild and sweet; his cheerful willingness to sing for those who night by night beguiled the weary hours around the soldiers' watch-fires with his voice; all these things long had wrapped his friend in a mantle almost like fascination — a spell, he knew not what; but thoughts like these fell on him, and fancy-pictured stars, brought down from heaven, and lent to light his feet like spirit lamps — all suddenly gone out — lost, lost forever! In darkness, cold bewilderment, he wandered on alone; then stumbling o'er the dead, sat down and wept most bitterly.

Chapter V.

A captive! wounded, suffering, and alone! Ernest Rossi, the son of the mountains, the child of the mist, and the companion of the elements, is now immured in a cold, dark, fetid cell, where the sweet sunlight he loved so well never came, except in long, thin streaks through the narrow crannies, where jealous bars would have mocked even the struggles of a bird for liberty, and streaming across the damp floor, seemed to point, like spectral fingers, to the creeping things that trailed their noisome length along the ground.

Reader, have you ever visited the dark and hideous contrivances in the shape of dungeons, by which, in ages past, savage man has imposed the chain of captivity upon his fellow-man? Not a noble castle in noble, civilized Europe but has its nests of cells as inevitably as its banqueting hall — foul, noisome places, reeking yet with the sighs of miserable prisoners and the wasted life of murdered victims. Not a convent or monastery but has its infamous dens of captivity and vengeance, where the narrow autocrat of the community could wreak his barbarity upon the helpless subject of his power. Not a single building large enough to be the home of rank and wealth, or pompous enough to be dedicated to the service of God, which, in the famed quarter of civilization, Europe, and under the spiritual dynasties of Christianity during the early and middle ages, — ay, even as late as the seventeenth century, — is not garnished with its inhuman dungeons, as surely as it boasts of its allegiance to Christianity. We do not say the latter is the cause of this most direful propensity

on the part of the members of the human family to torture each other; but when newspaper Christians and conventionally pious citizens prate about the blessings and humanizing effects of Christianity, these inevitable appendages to every monastic institution, every religious order, and every feudal dwelling under the Christian rule for at least sixteen hundred years after the *humanizing* system was first established, seem to send up their mournful echoes from the broken hearts, wasted energies, and crushed limbs of the victims, whom human authority in general, and spiritual authority in particular, has condemned to pine away within them.

It is pleasant to sit through the long winter's evening by the cheerful fire and the mellow lamp, and, while the storm roars without, draw the crimson curtain closer, and, turning to the happy circle within, to hear the one read out, while others work or listen, the tale of piteous captivity, of long imprisonment and fearful wrong inflicted on helpless, fettered human creatures. Young ladies sigh, and old ones shake their heads. Young men cry, "Stuff!" and old ones go to sleep. Do any ever pause to think these things are true? *They have been;* and though modified in practice now, the *spirit* still remains, and would enact such horrors over again if it but dared. Oppression, the law of strength against the weak, and persecution for opinions, — these are the causes which have, which do, and will continue to, (unless you make men just, humane, and Christ-like, instead of merely "Christian,") impale each other, coward-like, by force of strength, in far more tortures than these pleasant fictions show.

It cannot be supposed that Austria, Germany, or Russia (Christian countries all) could be, in any part of them, without the glorious institution of dungeons deep and

noisome; and so poor Ernest Rossi found, when, struck down, but not killed, by Kalozy, he became a prisoner to the Austrians. It might have been supposed that they would have taken advantage of their gallant young foeman's presence amongst them to destroy him, in vengeance for what they had been taught by Kalozy to deem were his magical practices against them; but the governor of the town, into whose hands he had fallen, was an ignorant, superstitious, and cruel tyrant; and while his savage nature suggested no other mode of dealing with his victim than by torture, his superstition impelled him to believe he might attain to superhuman privileges in communing with the invisible world through the agency of the far-famed seer. The indignation of the Austrians had been so vehement against the supposed magician, that the governor had great difficulty in rescuing Ernest from instant and deadly retaliation; but under the pretext of reserving him for trial, and a more orderly mode of execution, he at last contrived to possess himself of the person of the captive, with whom he now determined to deal for his own private and special purposes. As he soon found his efforts to bend his unfortunate captive to his will unavailing, and fearing to put him to death, lest his disembodied spirit should be even more potent than his suffering mortal frame, he had no means of satisfying his hatred and cowardice but by the lowest species of retaliation he could devise, namely, insult and miserable captivity. Sometimes he effected this in deep cells where the light of the blessed sun never came, where noisome things ran round the narrow space, and the dripping of dank dews constantly irritated the nerves with their weary vibrations; sometimes in cribs contrived like the cage of the famous Cardinal Baillieu, too low to allow the inmate to stand up — too narrow to allow

him to stretch his cramped limbs. Latterly, and after many months had passed away since his first imprisonment, he had him removed to a narrow cell at the very top of a tall tower, surmounted by sheets of lead, which, on the same principle as the celebrated prisons of St. Mark, were calculated, by concentrating the rays of the fierce summer sun, to burn into the suffering brain beneath, and dry up the healthful juices into consuming fever and ultimate madness.

Unhappily we tell no tale of fiction. Unhappily, too, the mere recital of half the horrors which in Austria, Russia, Siberia, and India, are even to this day perpetrated in the sacred names of justice, patriotism, religion, and necessity, whilst they would harrow up the soul, would lead to no better results. We have long felt that the mere arm of restraint is but a temporary expedient for the remedy, but not the prevention, of cruelty and crime. If so-called Christianity, Mohammedanism, or even Buddhism, did exercise the gentle and humanizing influence that is claimed for them, these things would cease altogether; because, as religion is the most universal and potent source of influence upon a nation's action, so it must mould to some extent its general characteristics and individual opinions. Until, then, you can find a religion that will give the people individually and practically an impetus to humane and unselfish dealing with each other, look to see the outward forms of punishment change — chains and thumb-screws give place to more refined and ingenious modes of inflicting misery; but never look to see the spirit which hates and persecutes that which it no longer dare kill, changed by any other influence than a change of heart and spirit.

The tortures of his Austrian prison, however, fell far more lightly upon Ernest Rossi than they would have done

on thousands of stronger and more resolute men. *He was not alone.* They might shut out the sweet summer sun, but they could not exclude the starry eyes of angel visitants. They chained him up, and barred within narrow walls his mortal form; but many a long, wild flight his spirit took through worlds of rolling ether with his spirit guides. No human voice spoke consolation in the lonely cell, yet gentle whispers came and went all day, and through the livelong night; and gracious forms, more beautiful and shining than ever graced the proudest monarch's court, peeped like the moonbeams through the narrow grate, and lighted by his side like flakes of sunshine. They told him how each world hung like a bead upon the thread of spirit; his narrow earth was round him, but it moved not; his spirit was the only moving power, and this sped upwards like a shooting star. To-morrow he would be in paradise, his wrongs forgotten, and his prison left far, far behind — no memory of it cherished, yet its effects eternal on his spirit — chastened, strengthened, purified by suffering in its chains: the spirits of his captors, loaded with his wrongs, weighed down by that same crime, eternal in its consequences to all; their spirits chained as they had chained his body, until, like himself, they freed themselves through suffering. When his burning head would throb with pain, or scorch beneath the red-hot leads, came Eulalie, and in soft slumbers, fanned by angel breathings, would chase away the pains, and leave sweet, dreamy visions in their place.

At length the gentle gift of song returned to him. No matter where he was, in tower, or cell, or noisome, steamy dungeon, he sang all day, and often half the night. At first his captors feared the sweet, sad strains, thought they were spells to conjure evil spirits, and sternly forbade him

to utter them; but when they found he did not comprehend them, stared with a half-sane look that warned of madness, they let him sing, and, standing by his side, the viewless spirit cheered him to his task. Perhaps she (deeper read in human life than we poor mortals are) knew this exercise would save his wavering mind, and keep the strings of sense from snapping or preying on itself. In cells remote, and many a dungeon deep, the sweet, wild cadence rang like echoes from a distant world. The shivering captives heard it, dreamed of choiring angels keeping watch over poor mortals' woe, blessed God, and slept in peace. The jailers listened, and, with awe-struck souls, told their beads in quick succession, muttered a prayer, and curses on the singer. The wandering peasant heard it as he crept along the frowning walls, drew his rough hand across his eyes, and cried, "God help the poor, lone maniac!" Far out at sea the lonely ship-boy heard it. Rocked on the giddy mast by rushing winds, he thought some angel's song came on the blast — a messenger from sainted friends in heaven. He listened, bowed his head, thought of his home, and wept.

"Ave Maria!" sang the fisherman upon the shore, and "Ave Eulalie!" replied the echo.

"Santa, keep and guard us!" "Hush," they whispered. "The spirits of the murdered dead wail round the castle of the dark, bold keeper."

One ear alone, with perfect understanding, marked the strain. This was Augustine's, poor Ernest's noble comrade. Safe from the skirmish, where he had lost his friend, the young soldier followed in the course of duty the fugitive warfare of his unhappy countrymen. This had at length led him and them in the very neighborhood of the prison where his friend was lodged. Dear as their improvvisatore

had been to the Hungarians, they had made no effort to search for him, convinced that he had fallen into hands too savage and vengeful to spare his life.

The death of the beautiful peasant woman, (the mother of Ernest,) in a very short period after the atrocious act of a semi-public flogging, was soon noised abroad, and excited such universal indignation, that the perpetrators were obliged to excuse themselves on the plea that she had been punished for the attempt to practise magical and heretical arts — forbidden alike by the holy Catholic religion, and baneful to the safety and morality of the camp, while passing through which she had been arrested. This brought up again the question of the lost improvvisatore and his well-known but mysterious gift of clairvoyance; and although his body had not been found, his captors deemed it safest, after having subjected him to the routine of their hateful prisons, to protest that he had perished beneath heaps of slain at the breach.

This story was generally believed by all but the faithful friend who had seen him fall. After the most hazardous but minute search for his body, the warm-hearted young man resolved that his efforts should be extended to find the living and not the dead Ernest; and when at last the course of the campaign brought him beneath the walls of a castle from whence the well-remembered tones of a voice which, once heard, was never to be forgotten, came, borne on favoring winds, he became persuaded the spirit of his friend still spoke to him, but spoke in mortal song.

And where was Gabrielle? Once more let us seek her; and once again we find her shining in the halls of luxury — beneath the stately roof of pride — enveloped in the glistening robes of splendor, and floating in the very atmosphere of wealth, but not, as of old, in the unpretending cottage of

an artiste. Reposing on a velvet couch, with lofty dome above and stately statues round her, we find her now the mistress of Ravensworth Castle. Gabrielle, Countess of Ravensworth, we now must greet her. But O, how changed! Her form is still as graceful, her brow is still as fair; but her eye has lost its lustre, and her cheek its rose. Her sweet, glad voice now speaks in cold, imperious tone; her buoyant step is stately, proud, and measured.

The story of the change is quickly told. When first she parted from her heart's young love, she watched for his career, and marked its rise with secret joy and pride. She heard his name and read its mention in the journals of the time with honor, praise, and promotion ever associated; and in her deep, wild passion, she strengthened herself by such accounts against the fulfilment of her pledge with Ravensworth.

At length came the death tale, and with it came the story of the breach, the loss, the capture. Sick at heart, bending beneath the blight that thus unexpectedly fell upon her, the sounds of music became distasteful to her ear, her profession unendurable. The applause of the crowd seemed to mock her misery; and to fly from herself, her grief, and the odious thrall of serving a public with smiles and winning ways, whilst her secret heart was breaking, she determined to withdraw from public life, and seek seclusion to indulge her grief. Gabrielle fled from the world, but not from herself. Her grief pursued her; with it too, ambition, the proud, deep craving for command and splendor, more restless in her solitude than in her grief. She did not find the balm within herself, and nothing but the world could drown the sorrow she could not kill. We only do her justice when we admit she did love Ernest; and had that love had sway, not been divided with the splendid world, but

centred on him alone, — had she yielded to his own and her heart's pleadings, married and not parted with him, — that love would have unquestionably triumphed over every minor and baser purpose. It *was* divided, however. She thought not of his danger, but only of the honorable name he might bestow upon her. She thought not whether he might ever return, but only when he did, that he should bring her some better title than that of a beggar's wife. She contemplated what she deemed an immense sacrifice, when she proposed to resign the earl, castles, station, and wealth of Ravensworth. The countess of this brief, sand-grain of life shone far more brightly to her fancy than the obscure wife fitting herself and partner for eternity. And so she parted with her soldier-love, lost him, deplored him, sickened of the world, then sickened *for* it — and so became a countess.

And now, by a revulsion common enough among the aristocratic "*parties*" of European life, Gabrielle, after vowing at the altar to love, honor, and obey the man who bestowed on her title, wealth, and station, hated both her lord and her surroundings. Without the restraining grace of fixed and noble principles, to teach her grateful gentleness, even if she could not feign love, — with nothing more to gain, and loss of liberty added to her loss of love, — she scornfully avowed her detestation of her husband, and in open defiance of his really just indignation, set up the picture of her lover, which she had long concealed, and worshipped this among her saints.

It would be desecration to call the passion which Lord Ravensworth entertained for Gabrielle *love*. Yet passion it was — the one great passion of his life — with its dark shadow, jealousy. No change in her could touch him; she was all life to him; and therefore hate — hate of the thing

that stood between his love and her — this was the only thought that now possessed him.

Here is one of the pictures of a marriage contracted on *any* foundation except mutual affection, confidence, respect, and adaptation. Allied to her husband from none of these motives, Gabrielle presented the shameful spectacle of a *woman sold for hire;* for such are all women, married, bound up, either in the most holy, or the most loathsome and basely sensual of all associations, unless the tie be formed of nature's solemn compact, which joins for all eternity two souls — *divided halves* — and makes them one.

Amongst the numerous sinecures * which noblemen in England enjoy is the office of postmaster-general. At the time of which we write, this lucrative and onerous nothing-to-do office was held by Lord Ravensworth. The name and rank of the lady he had married were, of course, a popular theme of comment; and therefore one of the numerous subordinates belonging to the postal institution, whose duty it was to take charge of letters for whom no owners could be found, humbly waited on his lordship one day with a letter, doubtless designed for her ladyship, the countess, and written by some blockhead who was Gothic enough not to have heard of her ladyship's marriage, since it was directed to "La Signorina Gabrielle," at the suburban retreat which in her maiden days she used to occupy. Carelessly taking the letter, Lord Ravensworth *thanked* the bearer. Glancing at the postmark, and seeing that it came from L——stadt, the scene of the Austrian and Hungarian operations, his lordship presented the bearer with a guinea, and the prom-

* "Sinecure." A word signifying a commission to do nothing, or hold an office with no duties thereto attached, except to receive a large salary; usually supposed to be a delicate way which the English nation has of bestowing handsome incomes on its nobility, as a means of disbursing the heavy sums collected in taxes on the *common, grateful* people.

ise of similar golden thanks for every similar missive. And many came. Many golden guineas found their way into the messenger's pocket, and many letters into his lordship's. Some billets, directed with his lordship's own hand, (*not his secretary's*,) and marked "private," found their way to the remote fortress, where the poor improvvisatore sang his songs to silent stars and echoing angels; but not to him they came. The governor read them, and sorely was he perplexed in doing so. But of all these epistolary transactions Lady Ravensworth, the party most concerned, was wisely kept in ignorance profound.

It was dusky, lovely twilight. Within the castle walls the most profound stillness reigned. A gay party had lately been assembled to honor the noble hospitality of the distinguished *happy* couple; but the very sudden and alarming sickness of the countess had scattered the butterflies like a storm. They shook their plumes and fled from suffering *not their own*, as from a pestilence. She lay alone. The earl was going to town; but ere he left, he knocked at the door of his wife's boudoir, and, obtaining permission to enter, dismissed her attendant, and stood gazing for some moments in perfect silence at the picture of mournful loveliness she presented. She was robed in spotless white, and lay extended on a silken couch. Her fair, golden curls shadowed her like a shining veil. The faint, last tinge of setting sunlight streamed through the Gothic windows, tinged with their gorgeous-painted, many-colored hues. The splendid tapestry was drawn aside, and through the deep-set arches waving trees cast their deep shadows over the evening scene. Her perfect Grecian features looked like marble. Her violet eyes, with deep black circles round them, gazed wistfully into the far, far distance, a land where spirit only could compass the wide

space. The earl would have given his life to hold her to his heart, and call her "Love;" but the cold gaze of scorn she turned on him half froze him, and changed his feelings into a corresponding channel with her own.

"And so your ladyship has seen a spirit, I am told," he said, with cutting irony. "May I be bold to ask, madam, if it wore a Hungarian uniform?"

"Edward," replied the lady, in a calm, low tone, from which all passion or scorn was excluded, addressing him, too, by that name for the first time in many months — "Edward! on my salvation as a Christian, last evening, at this very hour, in this very room and spot, as I lay here, not sleeping, nor disposed to sleep, there where you stand, there rose, it seemed from out the very ground, a pale and lovely woman. She neither looked at me nor did she speak; but walking to that table, opened, just where you see it, yonder Bible; stooped over the book a while, and seemed to write; then coming back, stood for a moment fixed; then seemed to sink, just as she rose, and disappeared. Her dress might have been a nun's, or travelling pilgrim's, yet seemed to fall off from one of her fair shoulders; and, as she stooped, I saw what seemed to be a deep red stripe across it. Her head was bare; her hair fell loosely round her in long, black curls. Now, Edward, look. That book stands open; its huge gold clasps, yourself have told me, have not been undone since, in your early childhood, your father died. Look, too, at the writing. Mark it well, and tell me, is that fancy? If not, who did it?"

Crossing the room, the earl, by the waning light, gazed steadfastly at the book. It was an immense family Bible, with heavy clasps grown far too stiff and rusty by disuse for the delicate fingers of his fair wife to open. He remembered noticing this very book closed when he had

visited his lady's apartment a very few minutes before her shrieks summoned him back to her side on the previous evening, when she declared she had been terrified by an apparition, and in consequence she was attacked by a succession of fits. There, on the open page, he perceived heavy marks in ink, underscoring the following lines from the 12th chapter of St. Luke: "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known." On the margin, at the end of this passage, was written, in a fine, female hand, the single word "Beatrice."

Without making a single comment on her story, the earl returned to the couch, spoke a few affectionate words of warning concerning her health, and, promising to be back very soon, — encouraged, it would seem, by her subdued and softened manner, — he stooped and imprinted several kisses on her cold, impassive face. What moved him then, none can ever say; but as he rose again, he drew out his handkerchief, buried his face in its folds, and left the room.

The lady lay in long and silent contemplation. The full moon rose at length, and, shining through the window, threw the shadow of its deep arches and diamond panes upon the floor; and Gabrielle was soothed, as, idly tracing its fantastic reflections, she began counting the shimmering squares — one, two, three ——. What breaks the image? The moonbeam gleams on something white and square; it is a letter; my lord has surely dropped it. Quitting the couch, she takes it up and hastens to the bell. It is sealed; it may be of consequence. He'll doubtless not be gone; or if he is, some groom must overtake him. Her maid enters with a light, and, ere she speaks, the lady glances at the cover. A pause. Had this been on the stage, the lady should have shivered, quivered, stroked her hair, or

pushed it back; gone mad, and let it down; or hugged her maid, and told her all her sorrows. Gabrielle did none of these, but, simply bidding the girl set down the lamp and quit her, locked the door, broke the seal, and read what follows: —

"To the Governor of L——stadt Fortress, &c.

"Sir: I cannot understand your hesitation in the matter upon which we have correspondence. As I before explained to you, the rascal whom they call Ernest Rossi was one of a vile pack of mendicant singers; and, by dint of a handsome face and good voice, he insinuated himself into the protection of a family, whom he plundered and otherwise basely wronged. To avoid the disgrace of an exposure, I got him drafted off into a forlorn service in the hope of getting him killed out of the way. You tell me he is your prisoner, and generally believed to be dead. What, then, do you lose in complying with my request? Your cousin, Carl Kalozy, has had proof enough of my generosity in serving me in this very same matter; and know, if there be any magic to be feared in the matter, the wretch could work it with more certainty whilst he has a human body to work with, than when he is a spirit — if, indeed, a man of your sense can believe in such bugbears, invented by idle priests to frighten infants with.

"Once more, and that without any paltering, I request you to give my messenger admission to the cell of your vocal captive, and let him deal the blow your superstition fears to strike. If the grant allotted to your cousin Kalozy be insufficient, my messenger is trusty, and has full power to deal with you to the full extent of your demands. Yours, &c., RAVENSWORTH."

Before that full moon waned, that very night, the countess stood within her husband's library; the doors were locked, a chisel on the table, and all around her open letters. These last were chiefly from Kalozy, full of complaints against the part assigned him, as executioner of the improvvisatore. Then a fresh packet, all addressed to Gabrielle. They came from poor Augustine, the singer's

faithful friend; told of the plots designed against his life; his loss, and search for him; his dear voice heard recalling hope and effort; the peasants' tales in the dark castle's neighborhood, how some poor maniac, chained by the dreaded governor, was kept to sing his spells, and summon spirits to work enchantments at his captor's will. These idle tales, connected with the place and that remembered voice, all testified his dear, lost Ernest was a prisoner. This he had told his comrades; but they disbelieved him, or those who heard the voice and recognized it, feared to attack the place, and were too poor to ransom, buy, or bribe. All this the faithful soldier duly told, and craved poor Ernest's love to send them money to aid their secret efforts.

Still morning found the countess at her work. With dawn's first streak of gray she quitted it, closed up the broken cabinet, tied up the letters, placed them within her bosom, then left the room; reëntered her boudoir, and sat down to THINK. Scarce had the dreadful whirl of giddy thought around her burning brain shaped itself into "Ernest," than by her side a pale, sad woman stood, with seared and naked shoulders, airy form, and one white spectral finger pointing out the ominous verse, in the still opened book. One moment there — the next, the countess gazed in air at vacancy.

CHAPTER VI.

POWER, wealth, rank, talent; modern spiritualism, mesmerism, and mediumship — all instruments of mighty potency — for what? Just what you use them for; no more. Mere tools to carve out power, they each are roots

of every evil, or all are seeds of good, just in proportion to the ground they are sown in, or training they are subjected to. And so Lady Ravensworth discovered — as first with her rank and power she commanded service, and next with her wealth secured it. Not many days had elapsed since the Earl of Ravensworth's departure from his home, and mal-apropos neglect in dropping the very letter he designed to confide to his accommodating post office subordinate, in his wife's apartment, ere the lady had turned the discovery it afforded her to very prompt and efficacious uses. First she despatched certain trusty messengers to the war office, with various missives to different persons from whom she expected aid in case her other measures failed her. She next sent still more trusty persons to the scene of Ernest's captivity; some of whom she placed under the direction of his friend Augustine, and others she equipped with letters and means to procure all the additional force (should that be needed) which she conceived the case demanded. To the gentleman whom Lord Ravensworth designed to honor with the choice epistle quoted in our last chapter, the countess wrote, in brief but peremptory tone, and in her own name, demanding the instant release of the captive in return for a large sum which she tendered as ransom. She knew this man was Kalozy's cousin, and, gathering from the correspondence she had so daringly broken into, that her husband had promised a grant of land, which he had been about to confer on the dead Kalozy for the governor's service as executioner to his captive, she boldly confirmed this promise as the result of his immediate liberation; adding that as *Lord Ravensworth was dead*, the governor's only chance of securing the ransom and the grant was by his compliance with *her* will. Should he refuse, "a thousand English yeomen, her

ladyship's own tenantry, and bound to do her pleasure, should bring her message to his castle walls in fire and sword, and stern old English vengeance."

Lady Ravensworth was rich, and by her husband's generosity had been most nobly dowered; but to raise all the money for which she had immediate need she had been obliged to send for men of business, and make sudden and enormous sacrifices of much of her private means. But what was this to her now? Ernest was living and a prisoner; if husband, title, land, and wealth could buy *his life*, what were they to her? Ay, indeed, Ernest was living! Had she known this, the empire of the world would not have tempted her to wed another. Ernest living, and she another's wife! — made so by fraud, deceit, and stratagem.

At first she only thought of him alive, on earth, breathing the air with her, a tenant of the same world. To free him, save him, bring him to her home, — to see him, hear his voice, — this was enough. Then came the hideous thought — lost to her, or rather she to him — and how? By the contrivance of *her* lord, *her* husband, and *his* would-be murderer. Yes; whilst he, her love — the idol of her soul, the darling ideal of her wildest fancy — had been languishing in unimaginable misery in prison, she who had sent him forth, and sacrificed him to her wild ambition, she had lain within his murderer's arms, and clasped, day by day, the very hand that was writing plots to slay her darling. O, horrible, inhuman wretch! *Her* husband! He who had dared to steal her by false tales from Ernest, and then pollute her existence by the daily breath of murder. Murder! Ay, what was murder? Not good enough for him — the hated foe of Ernest. And yet, "*would he were dead!*" What should she do? How

brave his dreadful wrath? The whole discovery of what she had done — his cabinet destroyed, its contents rifled, his dark plots all discovered — one of her own estates, a marriage dower, recklessly traded away to procure money to buy her lover's freedom — this for herself was nothing; what would *he* say? The world, the sneering world — what if she told the tale? Who would believe her? Or those that did would laugh, scorn, or, worst of all, but pity her.

"O that he were dead!" Could hate but kill! Ernest free, too; O, what joy and blessing! And yet, Ernest free, and she his would-be murderer's wife — how should she meet him? Worse, worse than all, how could she live without him? Should she fly to him? What, and leave the coward foe triumphant over her and her disgrace! Yes, disgrace, contempt; and he, the wretch, go free. Could she not be revenged? Her blighted life, her ruined happiness, and much wronged love — should all, all fall on her, and none on *him*? "O that he were dead!" dead, cold, and stiff; laid deep within the ground, or sunk below the wave! Would that the sea would drown him!

In seven more days he would return from Paris. And as she sat upon the dreary rocks that stretched away beneath her castle walls, and stared in almost mad despair upon the boiling waves that beat against their iron sides, she wished that they were living creatures, would hear her pleading cry, and drown him — beat him into pieces — rid her of him. O, would not something aid her? The rushing winds — they, in their fury, had slain full many a hapless wretch; why would they not kill him? The flying lightnings would strike down happy husbands, good fathers, gentle friends; would they not have pity on her, and kill her hateful foe?

With curious wonder she would trace the falling masses of some giant rock torn by the miner's powder from its old, primeval bed, and speculate upon a crushed and mangled form beneath, *so it might be her husband's.* Sometimes she would picture a carriage plunging over a precipice her very soul would shrink to dream of. Shrink? not she; she would trace its downward crash — down, down, lower, lower yet — tumbling over and over; while in secret joy she saw its pale, dead inmate, all crushed and torn, dead — dead! O that he were dead! The assassin's knife, or poison by *mistake* — ah, yes, such things had been before. Age after age, good men had died — torn, bruised, drowned, poisoned, every way they had died, — why should not bad ones die? And one, too, every way abhorrent in her path — that path all clogged with ruin, *if he lived.*

She had acted with such open desperation that now she had no retreat. *He must not, cannot live. Something will kill him.* Ay, but what? In thought, at least, that something might be *murder;* for she had murdered him in thought and wish a thousand, thousand times. And now, when doleful winds sighed "murder" in her ear, the thought embodied in this awful word seemed hateful. She almost shrieked and started from herself — ran over rocks and woods to fly from self. And when at last she sat her down, oppressed and out of breath, beneath the shadow of the ivied tower, no sooner was she composed, than once again she wished that *he* was there, and that the tower might fall and crush him; she would look on, gaze on his mangled form, and *mourn* for him. The world would sympathize and honor the noble widow, and all her woes would end. And Ernest — he would come; and she — but hark! The deep bells chime eleven. She counts the beats. The last one sounds out "murder." She sleeps;

and every gallery is dark in midnight's sombre robe. Beneath each marble form and ghostly bust a shapeless something seems to lurk, waiting a signal to creep forth, and do a deed she cannot name, and yet she knows 'tis "murder." And all these galleries are full of things waiting for her husband. She starts, and wakes. The cold moonbeam, with pallid fingers, writes upon the window, "Murder." She turns and turns the long and weary night — *the* night — the ages in one night. Sure it must be many long years, that dreary, livelong night; for how many old and bygone histories she recalls of wretched ladies forced by fate on crime — the hapless Cenci's dark and fearful mystery — the dreadful Borgias, and even the Hebrew Judith; ay, it was a noble deed — a brave, fair woman ridding the earth of monsters, not fit to live. Now she is in France beside the fair Brinvilliers; how skilfully she knew the trade of poisoning! It was world-wide, the knowledge how to let life out, and yet she, this wretched wife, so wronged, with a serpent in her way so dire they could not both live — one must kill the other; *she* knew nought of poisoning.

Thank God, it was morning. Last bitter night she had prayed for darkness; now she longed for light. Another hour and she would say, "Would God it were night!" O, miserable lady! Hark! The skylark sounds its matin in the sky; the small birds twitter, and the thrush awakes. Alas, they all cry, "Murder, murder!" By day or night some phantom in her ears holloes in ocean's roar or booms in thunder, howls in the winds or murmurs in the breeze, chants in the voice of birds or sighs in flowers — "Murder, murder." "Nothing else but murder."

Had you asked her why she thought of murder, she would have turned on you a piteous glance, and told you of evil

spirits tempting her, and turning all things to murder. She herself, she'd tell you, "would not hurt a fly," or take the life of the smallest thing that breathed; but *something*, like a presence dodging round her, forever whispered to her, "Death to Ravensworth." She never thought of him except as dying, slain, destroyed by something. And though the thought came startling to her mind — most horrible and full of shuddering — yet *come it would* unbidden, ever there. The air spoke of it; her life, past, future, present, all seemed made for this one end — she must be wife to Ravensworth the murdered. At first the dreadful phantom seemed to grow out of her desperate condition. After a while, seeming familiar as a household thing, it became no longer an effect, a necessity, but *fate*. She *knew* the thought, and now no longer feared it. She said 'twas "fate;" and all the voices sounding in her ear — her every thought centred on deeds of murder. The coming tragedy rehearsed, first in wishes, then in possibilities made familiar in unnumbered precedents, and afterwards reflected on in divers expedients, at last assumed to her the shape of "*fate;*" and that which, step by step, she'd *made* and *fashioned*, she now believed was *destiny immutable*.

We know we're tempted; hear the whisperers, and recognize the strong, red, spirit hands that lead us on to crime; the pointing finger, the guiding footprints. The world is full of precedents, the air with impulses, society with men and spirit tempters; but what invites them? Is it not ourselves? What attracts them? *Some like sin in us*. If they point the way, who follows? If they suggest the deed, who acts it out? Is prompting action? If so, why does the penalty fall upon the actor? If we complain we sin because another tempts, then who has the

merit of victory when we resist the tempter? Think you our God abandons us to the dark and evil prompter on the left? Is there no white-robed angel on the right, stretching out a hand as strong? pointing, with footprints quite as deep, a better way, and whispering "conquer" in a tone as loud? We say we're virtuous, strong, triumphant, when we conquer sin; nor do we ever think of robing our better angel in *our* plumes of victory; but when we fall, we're *victims to our fate*, "controlled by evil spirits," subjects merely of their all-ruling power. When *another* bears the penalty of our ill deeds, or another wears the trophies of our good, — when happiness or misery, life or death, can be endured for us by proxy, — then may we say, "A tempter made me sin," or else, "My better angel would not let me."

Wretched Gabrielle! She thought a crime, then wished it. Her strong, bad thought called up a thousand strong, bad souls around her. These pictured through all her nature her own foul wish; but let it be remembered, '*twas her wish.* She made the substance, they but reproduced its shadow. Hers was the voice that first produced the red word "murder." The thousand voices that she heard around were only echoes.

Seven days were over; still he came not. Did she rejoice at this, and wish, and pray that he might not come yet? Something might detain him — perhaps his guardian angel, in mercy to his now fast flickering life. And where was hers? Close by her side, or hanging round his way, whispering in her ear, "Mercy, forbearance;" in his, "Beware."

So he lingered, and so she had time; and yet she feared, but only that he would not come. Many weeks rolled on. From time to time she heard of Ravensworth;

and the commencement of this history might say, in some [illegible] tone, the might have read the warning of her good angel — "Repent, and save thy soul — there yet is time."

But, alas! these same rolling years brought also proofs of lessen — these guided her to madness — his wrongs and sufferings, the difficulties that still beset her path, her husband's agency in all this woe, and her own most desperate course in opposition to him. The angel whispered still; but its sweet low tones were lost in the [illegible] from herself pronounced — "For me there's no repent."

Three months had almost sped their flight. Lord Ravenswoth returned. Confronted now they stand, the wife and husband. Both know the other now; but yet no word is spoken. Lord Ravenswoth had missed his letter, had returned during his wife's absence, and knew that letter lost. He well divined who found it. Urgent business had detained him; but his wife's proceedings with reference to her property, and the means taken for the liberation of her lover, were all reported to him. Happily for the success of her efforts, she had been prompt and almost superhuman in her speed, whilst the full details of her movements were not fairly known to him until some weeks later. Attempt at instant counteraction on his part seemed to be his only resource; but until he beheld the actual result of the plot on her side, and the counterplot on his, he resolved to conceal his knowledge, and trusting the guidance of his future conduct to his wife entirely to uprising circumstances, he met her with a show of the same confidence and affection with which they had parted.

Once more the gentle prompter said, "There's time!"

But again the loathing soul of Gabrielle responded, — "Ernest!"

Amidst the pale moonlight wave the laurel trees; close and thick they grow, polished, cold, and gloomy as Plato's Academic groves of old. Crouching amidst their shadow, inhaling the faint but baleful aroma they send forth, steals the closely shrouded form of Gabrielle. Three months of study in the hideous school of poisoning had taught her how to weave the amaranthine wreath of immortality more surely out of laurels gathered at moonlight, distilled in midnight dews, drank fresh and fasting, than victory's red arm, or death in battle, had ever done for warriors.

The will once formed, the way was soon made plain; and now she stands triumphant in her studio, pale as a Pythoness, before her laurels, putting the dreadful science she had studied into practice.

'Tis midnight of the second day since Ravensworth returned. Coldly reserved, but studiously calm, the unhappy pair had met, conversed, and even laughed together. His lordship had been engrossed by receiving visits from his stewards, bailiffs, and men of business. As yet no one had come to tell *the tale she knew of.* The evil hour, and with it the full disclosure, (at least as she thought,) was yet postponed.

At night, before they separated, they walked together on the terrace that surrounded the castle. The nightingale sang her liquid notes of unimaginable tenderness in the thick groves of myrtles. The silent stars and gracious moon looked down in softened light upon a far extended landscape of wondrous, varied beauty. The breath of rose and orange blossom perfumed the tranquil air. There stood the noble castle full of gems of art, wealth, power, and every attribute, to bless its owner and scatter blessings

[illegible]

eyes, and wept. Along the noble corridor they pass. Now pausing at her chamber door, the earl still holds her hand. With courtly grace he raises it to his lips.

"Cruel lady, if we needs must part, good night."

"Good night, my lord; to-night we needs must part," the lady slightly murmurs; then, passing within her chamber, adds, "Must part to meet no more."

From the deepest and most dreamless slumber that had ever sealed up his eyes, Lord Ravensworth suddenly awoke just as the castle clock was sounding two. 'Twas yet quite dark, and at first he felt impressed that the deep-mouthed time-teller had awaked him; yet sleep on the instant seemed as effectually banished from his eyes, as if it were broad daylight. He could not distinguish the actual contact of any substance, and yet neither could he divest himself of the feeling that a strong arm was holding him forcibly down, and a heavy hand was on his lips. He saw nothing, though the moon's rays shone full into the room. He felt nothing sensuously, *yet every thing sensationally;* and thus it was that, with eyes half closed, and seemingly fixed as by a vice of iron, he beheld the door of his dressing room (which was the only private means of communication with Lady Ravensworth's apartments) very cautiously and noiselessly opened, whilst Gabrielle herself, in a loose robe, crept into the room, and stealthily as a spirit glided to the side of the bed.

Arrested by the same trance-like yet conscious power that bound his form but left perception free, the earl neither spoke nor moved. And yet he felt, and partially beheld her stoop over him, listen to his breathing, pass her hand before his eyes to try if they would open; then he, with sidelong glance, beheld her, as rapidly as thought, take up the night glass standing on his table, and for the

glass containing clear cold water, which it was his custom to swallow every morning on first awakening, substitute one which, he had seen from the first, she carried in her hand. This done, the stealthy figure moved away, gently drew back the door, and would have passed; but no — the spell was broken. A hand was on her shoulder — a hand of iron. Back it dragged her into the room she had left, shut the dividing door and locked it, held her in its sinewy strength till other doors were locked, then bore her to the bed, placed her upon it, and then released her. And there she sat, white and silent as the grave, whilst before her stood Lord Ravensworth, pale as herself, but silent now no longer.

Taking the glass which *she had substituted*, he held it to her lips, and simply pronounced the single word — "Drink!" But one word; but O, what a world of destiny, despair, and agony hung on that word, again and again repeated! Her pleading look, her wild and haggard eyes, her white and speechless lips, all, alas! bore their fatal testimony to her guilt, but only added point to the deep and unflinching purpose with which he echoed again, and yet again, —

"Drink! deeper yet, my lady! Pledge thy lord even to the very dregs; drink deep! *drink all!*"

"Edward, Edward! mercy!"

The shrinking victim's now upon her knees, the half unfinished draught within her hand.

"Drink!" shouted the earl. "Drain the glass to Ernest!"

"To Ernest!" gasped the countess, and set the glass down empty.

Once more the Lord of Ravensworth led his lady through the noble corridor where three hours earlier they'd parted.

Once more before her chamber door he paused; and once again, but now in solemn mockery, he stooped and kissed her hand.

"Farewell, my gentle lady love," he said. "When we meet, 'twill be ——"

"In judgment, Edward; and may God have mercy on our guilty souls!"

Chapter VII.

'Twas cold, gray morning; the dawn of such a day as seems to wrap itself within the shroud of night, hiding the warm sun in its stony bosom, and to creep through time arrayed in the gray panoply of mourning for the departed stars. Lord Ravensworth was up by earliest streak of dawn. Till near midday he paced the long galleries of his splendid dwelling, uncertain what to do or where to go. Fifty times he had asked for Lady Ravensworth. They told him she was ill, — not alarmingly so; no leech was sent for. She was simply "*indisposed*," — could not be seen. *He did not ask to see her;* yet, with a strange and morbid curiosity, he kept on questioning how she was, and why she did not come abroad. At length he said "he'd go."

His valet asked him where.

He could not tell. "Pack up some things."

"For how long a time, my lord?"

He did not know.

"The carriage? post horses? stage coach? What would his lordship choose?"

"Any thing — something! A horse; the fleetest one in all the stud! A valise — no more; no groom, no valet. I must be alone."

He's gone. Passing in Gabrielle's face, the unmeaning whisper, "Will she sleep. She hate to not disturb her. Come away."

Again alone, she walks into the closing of the door, it spring from her touch with strong and sudden movement, with all the morning energy of life and health. First she went to the window, and drawing wide open the damask hangings, let in a flood of light upon the chamber and her-self. Placing herself full before the splendid pier glass, she stood in rapt contemplation of the scene. Behind her hung a lifelike portrait of what she was — a bride — the blushing, fair, and radiant Gabrielle. Life, youth, and beauty beamed from the canvas. A chastened sadness sat upon the brow; 'twas but the fleecy summer cloud upon the sunlight. The image, full in beauty reflected, shone within the ample mirror; and by its side stood Gabrielle — Gabrielle of Ravensworth.

Scarcely sixteen months had intervened since the two pictures thus presented were each taken from life; but what a wondrous change between them! The long, white drapery of the countess's morning robe fell like a shroud around her, yet, white as it was, contrasted painfully with the livid ash-hue of her skin. The bride's round, ivory arms, now thin and blue; the soft, pink hand, now waxen and transparent; the sunny curls, each twined with orange blossoms, smooth, silky, and distinct in their golden order, now hung in long, dishevelled, waving threads of auburn, the picture of neglect; the sunken cheek, wan brow, and livid lips; the heavy eyes, with deep, black halos round them; — all these made up a temple guesting the very genius of decay and ruin. But even this was more tolerable than the deep thrill of anguish and despair that sent its chords vibrating through those features as she herself gazed on the wreck.

"If *he* should come in time he will not know me," she murmured; then, sighing deeply, turned and paced the room. What she thought of, none could say. She spoke not; never raised her eyes from off the ground, nor ceased her dreary walk for two long hours. She sometimes sobbed, but never shed a tear. Sometimes the memories that crowded round her seemed to wreathe themselves in shapes which floated like a misty crown upon her brain. First came the village school room, with its open door, and sunny green beyond, and rosy, happy faces peeping through; the kind old schoolma'am's gentle "well done, child;" the little heart leaping at the well-won prize; the merry play, and boisterous, gleesome laugh; the romp, the swing, the dear companion's secrets; in elder days, the first triumphant throb when wondering masters praised the melting voice, and pictured scenes of world-admiring crowds. And O, the glorious days of Rome and Florence! the sunny skies, the classic scenes of study; companionship with Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn; the flood of inspiration pouring in strains of self-made melody upon her soul, wafting her, saint-like, to the choiring skies; the proud, triumphant empire of La Scala, crowning her, queen-like, with the earth's ovation. Her gentle mother's fond, encircling arms; her tender voice of warning and her anxious care; the holy prayer to Virgin Mother whispered "*Ora pro nobis*," morn and eventide. And now she floated on Venetian streams, or sailed in gay companionship in wide, blue Naples' bay; once more she heard the gondolier's sweet chant, or plaintive vespers filled the twilight's gloom; and now she lay in sweet, luxurious stillness, beneath the white rose's fragrant shade, once more in her sweet Brompton home. Home, home! that blessed home! that sweet and peaceful spot, that lovely

home, where never care, or sin, or suffering came, and where she first saw Ernest!

Here we drop the veil. Let no human eye behold the writhings of that suffering face, the torture of that soul torn from its moorings, and cast upon the sea of wildest passion, without the pilot, principle, or captain of all salvation, God, to trust in, — passion, adoration for her human idol, generous but fervid impulses, her only guides.

They had trained her in the gorgeous Roman church. Imagination, senses, taste, all these drank in their fill. But Gabrielle unhappily had a *mind*, a wide and deep capacity to think. When thought, directed by her clear and lucid reason, strove to find, amidst the incense, thrilling tones and sights of beauty, aught of reality or truth to rest on, she lost her way in falsehood, doubt, and inconsistency. In deep bewilderment she questioned, "What is truth?"

Her priest responded, "Daughter, what *I* tell you."

Her strong, clear mind suggested, "But God's works —"

The priest replied, "Are all profane until I consecrate them."

"Alas!" the votary murmured, "my wandering thoughts still will reach forth in search of evidence."

"Give them to me," the churchman still insists. "Satan tempts men to *think*. Who dares to ask for evidence of what the sacred church teaches, or says, or does? Of all the snares the evil one has laid, nothing is half so dangerous as *reason*. Think, and you doubt; doubt, and you are lost, unless you buy your soul back with your fortune. Nothing in heaven is half so *dear*, or *costs* so much to save, as souls who dare to exercise their reason."

And now the wretched lady found that reason's voice had drowned the priest's. God's work is at odds with

what men call "his word." She had no knowledge, therefore no belief. *She knew she had seen a spirit;* so she knew that she, *a spirit*, must survive the grave. But what or where that world was, where her spirit fast was tending, only the dreadful tales of fear and superstition shadowed forth; and now, when her despairing feet were pressing to it, horror and chill dread dogged every footprint.

Hour after hour elapsed alone. O, 'twas agony to be alone! She could not bear it. Why did no one come? She would call her maid; but no, — her cold and unimpassioned face would bring no comfort to her aching heart — aching for love, for pity, for some cheering bosom, where she might sob her ebbing life away.

At last a footstep hastens to her door. It opens, and — O joy! her mother's arms enclose her.

The reader will not have forgotten Gabrielle's adopted mother, Mrs. Martin. This good and truthful friend was cognizant of her daughter's petulant and wayward fancies. She knew how she loved Ernest; how she disliked Lord Ravensworth. With the unsophisticated idea (chiefly promulgated by very old fashioned persons or very pure and strait-laced spirits) that marriage should be the union of two congenial souls, separated in their birth, but twin in their natures, and destined to grow into one life, in all eternity, good Mrs. Martin had firmly opposed the marriage of expediency with the earl.

Shocked by her daughter's violation of one of her strongest principles, they parted on the eve of the fatal wedding day. This was their next meeting.

By early dawn that day two fiery riders had issued from the castle gates; the wretched lady knew her doom, and these expresses had gone forth to summon to her side her

childhood's earliest friend, and one who, she already knew, was on his way to see her — the captive whom her generous care had freed. His faithful friend Augustine had charge and ample funds to bring him back.

"Whatever he knew about her was enough," she said. "Tell him nothing — neither whom he'll see, nor where he'll come."

Augustine had written that the poor prisoner, tortured almost to madness by his savage captors, — starved, bruised, and beaten, — subject to such wrongs as wreck the senses, and curdle up the blood, — had lost his memory, spirits, health, and youth. He had never heard of her marriage, and his tender friend had not found courage (so he wrote) to tell him.

"Be silent, then," the countess wrote in turn. "Perhaps," in thought, she added, "*when he returns I may be free again.*"

Evening at last. The sinking sun is setting far away over the tranquil sea.

"Mother," murmured the dying lady, raising her head from off her now damp pillow, "every golden cloud is printed with the fleecy words of glory, 'I will return.' O, will our spirits come, like setting suns, on each tomorrow of eternity?"

"Gabrielle, my only darling, pity me. I know there's something dreadful in this sickness. You say 'tis nothing; yet your limbs have been these many hours quivering with racking pain, and your face — O, what signs of agony it tells! — and hark, that sound again! Virgin Mother, shield us!"

Yes, there it was, distinct and clear — three loud yet muffled knocks beat on the panel directly above the couch whereon the countess lay.

"'Tis nothing, mother; I'm used to it now," replied Gabrielle, with perfect indifference.

True, she was used to it. Ever since the night when the misty form had stood beside the Bible, and with no human finger inscribed its page with written words, the sounds that now so startled Mrs. Martin, had rung in gallery, and hall, and salon. Wherever the countess appeared the knocks were heard. At first they only excited curiosity; at length they provoked investigation; but when no scrutiny could detect the cause, and still the invisible hammers seemed to dog the steps of the changed and miserable lady, who sternly reproved the servants for their idle fears, and yet herself tendered no explanation, the domestics one by one dropped off. On some excuse or other, all the old castle servants shrank away, whilst others, who took their places, fearfully whispered tales of a shadowy form — a woman pale and wan, with one bare shoulder striped with livid marks, who floated through the corridors and halls in misty twilight hour. The fearful grooms declared at dead of night a woman's wailing shriek would wake them up, while all could hear and testify to sounds like muffled feet or gloved metallic hand, knocking around the mournful countess's way.

Poor Mrs. Martin heard these tales with wonder, long ere her anxious eyes beheld her daughter; but when, at last, what she had deemed but idle superstition met with its confirmation in the unexplained and warning sounds, her very soul within her shrank aghast.

In many an old weird mansion in different parts of Europe, such sounds as these, and many others which the severest scrutiny has been unable to identify with any human agency, are often heard.

In houses highly charged with the magnetic force of

vigorous but wasted life, the spirits make a medium of such force, and often strive to call the timid children of earth to the understanding that what electricity can do in sounds, or force, the electrical body of the spirit can do, when it finds a force adhering to wood or stone, which forms a battery with and *for* them. Unhappily, we are accustomed to regard all things without the narrow limits of our senses, or our previous understanding, as "supernatural." Looking at all such manifestations through the veil of ignorance and fear, we invest the real with an atmosphere of unreality, or else repel it by our very terrors, until the world of spirits stands enrobed in a shroud of mystery and darkness, projected from our own fear and ignorance.

Mrs. Martin then, like many an awe-struck domestic of that castle of ill omen, sat and trembled, as, at frequent intervals, from different parts of the now fast glooming chamber, the knockers sounded their note of warning.

Glorious light of modern sense, all hail! How has thy torch shed on such mysteries the light of a true science! Instead of dreadful ghosts, we hear the precious signals of our friends. Our midnight spectres change to watching kindred, and churchyard ghosts have brightened into angels.

Whatever was the cause of Lady Ravensworth's indisposition, it was evident to Mrs. Martin that its character was unusual and alarming. In vain she pleaded to be allowed to send for medical aid. The causes for her suffering, as stated by Gabrielle, were plausible; but her resolve to have no aid, inflexible. As evening advanced, her restlessness, and the hideous action of spasmodic pains across her livid face, became more and more distressing. To all her mother's urgent appeals, however, she simply replied she was

waiting for some one. *He* was coming soon — very soon; and then she should be quite well.

And yet he came not. From couch to door, from door to window, with eager, listening ear and wistful eyes, the poor watcher traversed her chamber in unavailing expectancy. At length a sudden calm seemed to steal over her; the incessant restlessness of her wearied frame yielded to a tranquil, passive air. She lay extended upon a pile of cushions which commanded a view of the long gallery which led to her apartment. Suddenly the beams of the moon, streaming in many-colored hues through the painted Gothic windows, seemed to augment into the softly misty light of an autumn evening. Every object in the chamber, and even the dim colors on the grim old portraits, that in gloomy rows adorned the long gallery, all seemed to stand out as in daylight's bold relief; while clear as the vesper bell, sounding across a far, far distant lake, strains of delicious music, rising and falling in alternate cadence of strong and martial measure, came floating in waves of sound down the long corridor.

Gabrielle and Mrs. Martin *felt* no less than *heard* its glorious echoes; whilst, long years after, the villagers and distant herdsmen told how, on that night, for many miles around, domestics, all within the castle's range, heard "the phantom music," calling the soul of Gabrielle away. At first, in low and wailing notes it stole, like the lament of some unquiet spirit, throughout the castle halls. But louder still it grew, now swelling, pealing through arch and corridor in mighty diapason, until the very tones of different instruments seemed to ring out, as from a vast orchestra. There was the rolling thunder of the organ, the wild harp's ringing peal, the æolian's plaintive sigh, the fiery trumpet, and the mournful horn; a thousand soft,

melodious flutes, like trickling streams upheld the bird-like treble; whilst ever and anon, the muffled drum with awful beat precise, the rolling kettle, and the crashing cymbals, kept time to sounds like tramping of a vast but viewless army. Nearer now they come. The dull, deep beat of falling feet — 'tis in the hall — it marches up the stairs. It comes — it comes! Louder, and yet more loud, the music swells to thunder! The unseen mass must be the disembodied souls of every age since Time began his course, so vast the rush and strong the footfalls sound. And now the chant of thousand, thousand voices swelling, in rich, majestic choral tones, joins in the thundering crash.

Upspringing from her couch, as through the air the mighty hallelujah sounds, Gabrielle, with frantic gestures and wild, distended eyes, cried, "I see them now! the glorious, shining band! Led by the giant Handel, on they come. Welcome, great masters of the world of song! All hail, most noble Haydn, sweet Mozart, Gluck, Cherubini, Purcell, Arne, Porpora! O, what long array of souls divine, lit with immortal fire from heaven itself! Beethoven, too! O, let me kneel to thee, thou first and last of all the sons of song! Angels have spun thy soul from strings of music, and wove thy brain from out the threads of melody. Divine one, art thou come to take me home? — me, thy poor worshipper on earth? O, let me be thy child in paradise!"

The pageant passed, or seemed to pass, from her whose eyes alone of all the awe-struck listeners, whose ears that night drank in those sounds unearthly, with mortal gaze beheld them. To Mrs. Martin, indeed, it seemed as if the air of the music-haunted corridor was specked with glancing lights; and sometimes even the streams of thread-like

phosphorescent haze extended to the shape of a hazy human form, uplifting high some wild fantastic instrument. But even this, like Gabrielle's strange ravings, she attributed to the bewildering influence of fear, yet rapture, which the mysterious music wrapped all in who heard its solemn cadence. When at length, even to her ear, the last vibrating echoes of the music seemed to die away in utter vacant silence, she attempted to rouse her apparently entranced charge. Still *she* listened. Either her fine ear still drank in the music, or another sound had magnetized her powers.

"Hark, mother, hark! 'Tis carriage wheels. Do you not hear them? Now they cross the ford. Haste, haste, O, haste! A long mile intervenes. O, haste! *They call me home.*"

For full ten minutes, rigid, as cold as marble, the listening lady sat. To Mrs. Martin the stillness was intense. Yet *she*, the seeress and clairaudient, heard; for with bent ear she sat, until her heart-throbs marked the fleeting seconds.

To Mrs. Martin's joy she recognized at last, indeed, the very distant rumbling of some wheels. Nearer it came — it sounded in the court — some one alights — a stir — the sound of voices — now footsteps — yes, it is the ascent of footsteps, *human feet*, upon the marble stair, Nearer, nearer yet; hastily they come, like messengers of speed. They're in the gallery, upon the threshold — enter. Then, and not till then, the rigid lady moves. With one wild scream of joy she rushes forward, and Ernest Rossi clasps her in his arms.

For a few, a very few brief minutes in her mortal life, the wretched lady lived an age in heaven. She forgot her husband, name, and title — all. The presence of that one

beloved, redeemed by her, free and alive, and in her hour of anguish, — this was the one pearl in her cup of life that sweetened all the dark and bitter draught, and made it an eternity of compensation. With fond, wild tenderness, she gazed upon him, parted the damp curls on his livid brow, passed her cold fingers sadly over his wan and faded cheek, gazed in his anxious eyes, until her own looked in his very soul, and stamped there all the story of her love, her frailty, pride, ambition, guilt, and remorse. Then, winding her cold arms around his neck, she laid her weary head upon his shoulder tenderly, and silently as night passed through the portals of the land of souls.

'Tis midnight. Still as death the landscape seems. Hills, rocks, and rivers, even the babbling brooks, seem locked in sleep. The moonbeams dream upon the lone hill-side; the stars are sleeping in the glittering sky; the silent dell is full of dreaming flowers, whose colored cups are closed in balmy sleep. In all that wide and solemn scene of stillness, one only watcher breaks the charmed spell. Now he moves swiftly across the mountain top; now he climbs down rugged, wild ravines, seemingly for no other purpose than to pace the gorge's depth, and climb the hill again; anon his restless step is turned across the moor, as if some sudden purpose drove him on with almost lightning speed; but now he turns, and back his way he wends, in the very self-same track, and with the same impulsive speed. What is he doing in the lonely night? The night! Why, he's been walking this same way, and in the self-same spots, from early morning. Hour after hour, and mile on mile, the scorching midday sun blazed on his head, and still he sped from nothing to no place. The sultry noon still saw him driving past the glen and

thicket, with hot, desperate speed. The tranquil sunset purpled round his way, and still his turning round he hastened on. The gentle stars looked wondering on his track, and then he hied away. Their silver light shone like the eyes of angels, reading through his very soul, and this he could not bear.

Near yon thicket stands his horse — he tied it there at morning; still it browses quietly, awaiting hour by hour its restless master's will. How many leagues he's walked, and yet the whole within one narrow circuit! Never once has he lost sight of yonder frowning castle, wherever these gray towers uprear their gloomy height. He walked and walked, like a spell-bound magician. His clothes are dusty. In his haggard eyes one question seems to go searching forth — "*I wonder if she lives!*"

How many, many dreary times he's said this sentence over! He might resolve his doubt, would he but knock at yonder castle gate; but this *he dare not;* he has a secret, and it is so mighty a one, that he fears every human eye that looks on him must see it. Besides, although he wanders around that castle, as an enchanted circuit from which he cannot break, he knows there is something dreadful there, something which he's sure must be there, and which he would not look on for a thousand worlds.

For the twentieth time that weary, endless night, he turns to wander through the silent forest; when, just as he was near its first oak-opening, a deep yet distant bell struck on his ear.

"It is the convent chiming the midnight hour," was his first thought. And yet it had a tone of strangeness — deeper and slower than its wont, he thought it. Will it never cease chiming? Why, now he counts, and lo! some twenty strokes he numbers. 'Tis not the telltale hour.

Old Time has all run out his sand for some one; some soul has fled! and yonder mournful peal rings out its passage to its long, last home. What proud and haughty form can that be that's now laid low, for which the old gray castle bell would toll — that citadel of pride!

"How loud it sounds!" he thought — "*she must be dead at last.* I wonder how she looks! Hark! surely some one calls! That voice again! It sounds like hers — my wife's — no — *she that was my wife* — dead, poisoned — that is, *some may say that she was poisoned.* How should they know? *She* would never tell them."

"Edward! Edward Ravensworth!"

"By heaven, *it is her voice!*" and as if to assure him still more of who addressed him, close before his very eyes moved the figure of his wife. She passed from out a clump of sheltering trees, and slowly crossed his path. The moon shone full upon her, revealing her every feature, limb, and gesture — the same white robe in which he'd last beheld her, the long, streaming, sunny auburn curls — her slippered feet and silken sash were there. She turned her head, and on his wondering eyes her own appealing glance was fixed a moment; then she passed away, he knew not where, or how.

"'Twas she," and in full life, too. "God of heaven, she lives!" Down on his knees the wretched husband fell, and in a flood of wild and broken tones thanked God he was *no murderer.*

He never paused to think that he might be deceived. Spirit, illusion, nothing of this he'd seen; *'twas Gabrielle,* his wife, and living still. Perchance she'd run away, or come to seek him. Perchance the draught was harmless, after all. Enough for him, *she lived;* and hastening home, more like a hawk than mortal man, he flew, until he

reached the castle. Just as he reached it some one was passing in. Again he thought he saw the fluttering dress of Gabrielle. 'Twas something white and human. The gate was open, too. A carriage preceded him, and servants gathered round it.

Taking advantage of the seeming confusion occasioned by the arrival of strangers, (although at any other time this very fact would have elicited inquiry from him,) he passed through the throng unnoticed, entered the castle, traversed gallery and hall, until once more he paused before the door of his wife's apartments. At first he thought of knocking, as was and is the custom of "the great;" but something told him form was ended now. He opened wide the door, and stood within the chamber of the dead.

There lay the peaceful form — peaceful and rigid, as the clay-cold marble. They'd spread a drapery of soft, white gauze around her, and only the sad and livid, poisoned face was visible above it. Long rows of burning tapers shed their light upon the silent clay; and kneeling by its side — the side of her, his first love and his last — the pale improvvisatore was seen, the only life within that silent place.

Rising upon the entrance of the earl, the soldier, true of heart and firm of speech, accosted him with, "Welcome, murderer!"

Chapter VIII.

A coroner's inquest is at all times a dreary scene; but never more so than when bright summer air, beautiful surroundings, and wealth spread out their luxurious pages of contrast to the deep and solemn mystery of death. We may bid the aged God speed in the exchange of the old,

worn-out garment of clay for the bridal robes of immortal youth. We see the dark angel bearing away the half-famished children of poverty, or the sinking mariners in the sea of criminal temptation, and say, Thank God their weary life-pilgrimage is over! And yet, violence in the means, the sacrilegious hand of man raised against the only gate which the Creator has inscrutably veiled from his prying eyes — that of life — always awakens a feeling of awe and hopeless grief which no other sight can kindle up. And that violence against the young — O, what a fearful mistake! Against the rich and happy — what a mockery of the power of wealth to protect, or of fortune's gifts to confer, happiness!

Such was the sentiment that unconsciously spread the pall of gloomy silence over the hall where a large and wondering throng was assembled to consider the means by which Gabrielle, Countess of Ravensworth, high, noble, beautiful, and wealthy lady of one of the fairest earldoms in England, had come by her death. True, there was little or no cause for this inquiry in the external circumstances of the case. The beautiful young lady had somehow sickened in the atmosphere of splendor; languished beneath the weight of her coronet. It was enough to gaze into her mournful eyes, to know that she was not happy. Every one knew this; and every one formed his own conclusions as to the cause. The cold, proud peer at her side, and the dream-like gaze of those wandering eyes of hers looking into the far, far distance, perhaps on the red battle plains of Hungary, or into the dark dungeons of Austria — "Ah! well-a-day!" said the busy world — "they are an ill-assorted couple, and good cannot come of it." But now she was dead, why not of a broken heart? "Pshaw!" The man of medicine knows nothing more

about hearts, than as huge lumps of flesh which do not crack without *physical* causes. "Spirit hearts!" and the effect of spirits on fleshly hearts! "Stuff! There is no such thing."

The lady had changed much of late — hollow cheeks, tottering steps, eyes now blazing with fever, and anon sinking like paling stars, are all suggestive — but all and every possible and impossible cause for the rapid and premature death, was silenced by the report of the tremendous charge made by a foreign soldier, on the night when the *disconsolate husband* returned to find his wife a corpse — two strangers in foreign uniforms standing beside the gloomy bier, and one of these, in the presence of his own servants, greeting him with the ominous words, "Welcome, murderer!"

At first, indeed, the compassionate nobleman would not condescend to resent this frantic expression. "The poor creature who used it had been an old lover of the lady's in bygone days, and under the influence of long captivity had lost his wits." But his companion was noticed to be singularly self-possessed, gentleman-like, and composed in his bearing — any thing but crazy; and when he in calm, yet resolute phrase told the steward that he had evidence to show that Lady Ravensworth had died of poison, and that the author of her death was the lord of the castle, and that he, Lieutenant Augustine A., intended to make his charge good, then, indeed, things began to wear a somewhat portentous aspect. His lordship was most respectfully informed that he must be detained under guard to refute this monstrous charge; and despite his sneers and indignation, detained he was. The nature, or rather details, of the accusation against him, did not at first appear; but when, after a careful post-mortem examination of the body, it

was clearly ascertained that death resulted from the administration of a violent and most deadly poison, these details were called for in the imperative name of a coroner's inquest.

None awaited the result of these proceedings with so much indifference as the earl himself. He had ascertained that the soldiers did not arrive till the very instant that the countess died. He had no fear of her having made any confession to Mrs. Martin; for she was as much astonished as any one at the assumption of death from poison. He therefore inferred that the whole charge was but a supposition on the part of her unhappy lover. But when the young Lieutenant Augustine A. proceeded to explain the nature of the accusation, the confusion of the earl became infinitely greater than the astonishment of the jurors.

He had travelled with his friend Ernest Rossi, he stated, from L——stadt to England for the purpose of visiting La Signorina Gabrielle. Both were unaware of her marriage till recently; and when the witness (Augustine) heard the news, he strove to conceal it from his charge, lest he (in very precarious health) should suffer by the intelligence. Accustomed to receive many strange but truthful revelations through his friend's gift of clairvoyance, (a word which made the jurors start and glance over their shoulders,) he had heard him describe, on a certain night, the Castle of Ravensworth in accurate detail — the appearance of the countess, her action in wandering into the gardens at midnight, her gathering the laurel leaves, concocting or distilling from them a deadly poison — the return of the earl, his sleeping apartment — the stealthy visit of the wretched wife, and the attempted substitution of the cup of poison for the night draught — the sudden act of detection on the part of the justly exasperated intended victim, and his cruel

retaliation in forcing the miserable woman to be her own executioner.

The confirming testimony of this miraculous story was the witness of innumerable persons that the two strangers had only arrived on the English shores just as the countess's expresses had reached them; that they could therefore have had no previous knowledge of the castle and its details before they arrived at the hour of Gabrielle's decease, since which, to the period of the earl's return, the testimony of every domestic was equally positive concerning the impossibility of their having seen one single spot so accurately described, or communicated with one of the inhabitants of the castle.

The whole strength of the charge, then, lay in the unquestionable fact that the seer had pronounced the lady poisoned before the medical examinants knew of the fact; and had, moreover, so minutely described the condition of the remains under the action of the poison, that the whole of the medical staff were fairly bewildered; whilst every scene, and even the minutest articles of furniture connected with the localities where the tragedy was enacted, were given with a fidelity which placed the intelligence (come from where it might) beyond all question.

The scrutinizing cross-examination of Augustine and the castle domestics closed this part of the testimony. But when the jurors were sitting in absolute perplexity, what to do or say next, it suddenly occurred to the coroner that it might be well to question the subject of this strange revelation in person; and after some objections on the part of Augustine, overruled by the awakened curiosity of the court, it was decided that the improvvisatore should be summoned to appear.

How wonderful is the influence which attaches to each

human being, stamping, with an individuality far exceeding all effect of place, time, or circumstance, a character on every member of the human family which never can be masked by hypocrisy, or simulated by effort. *Spirit* is the only reality in all creation. Forms and mere externals are shadowy, changing things, impressing each beholder with a painful sense of something hidden, something transitory, and unreal. But spirit is a truth, *the only truth*, a portion of the changeless being of God. Smiles, tears, speech, and deeds, may all be so many masks to cover the real thought or purpose; but that nameless something which each human presence brings, is the magnetic scale in which external forms, when robed in falsehood, are weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Ernest Rossi came. Those who had seen the noble soldier two short years ago — strong, vigorous, and active, — the mountain air glowing in ruddy health upon his cheek, the light of youth and gladness dancing in his eyes — would scarcely have recognized the pale, sad stranger who now stood in court. While still and impassive as the sculptured marble was that most noble face; large and lustrous as the lonely evening star those mild, dark eyes; and slightly bowed, as with the shadow of a long and weary life, that once tall, graceful form.

"What a wreck they've made of my beautiful, my brave!" thought poor Mrs. Martin, as with swimming eyes she looked upon her favorite.

And yet, as he entered that gloomy hall, and stood before the curious gazers, so still, and abstracted from the passing scene — he brought with him the potent presence of his truthful mind, his pure, unselfish nature, and that inborn dignity which repels the shafts of lower minds, as ocean's might absorbs the drops of rain.

Before he came, the very name of clairvoyance suggested to the ignorant minds of self-conceit nothing but charlatanism or the dreams of lunacy. In his presence, something like respect mingled with awe prompted every tongue to hush the sneer or change it into admiration. To every question he gave such simple, yet straightforward answers, that the testimony of his friend Augustine seemed to loom out in obstinate defiance of all power to shake. And once more the nonplussed jurors gazed at each other with looks that clearly asked, "What's next to do, or say?"

Up to this point Lord Ravensworth had remained in profound silence, and half concealed by the drapery of a window from the searching eyes of the curious. Now, however, bending forward, he asked with a quivering lip and voice, which shook despite his efforts to conceal his agitation beneath a sneer of absurd indifference, "If the gentleman expects to convict an English peer of murder, upon the faith of his magical powers, may it not be fair to demand some evidence that his wondrous facility for prying into other people's concerns is not the result of collusion with my servants, or even my late unhappy lady?"

A murmur of assent ran through the court, emboldened by which the earl proceeded: "Pray, Mr. Ernest Rossi, could you (being, as you have shown, at that time at Dover) see where I was yesterday at noon? — *exactly, mark! at noon?*"

"In Bevis wood," replied the seer, "and tying up your horse to the third oak tree on the left of the forest gate."

The earl changed color, yet proceeded: "Where is that horse then now, may I ask? for, truth to say, I had forgotten him, and left him there."

"Then you did so tie him up, my lord, and at that hour?" interrupted one of the keenest jurors.

Lord Ravensworth's counsel started, whilst the earl (though conscious of the mistake he had made) coolly added, "What of that? Does it require an angel from heaven to reveal a fact which any passing boor might have seen and reported?"

"We have the fact," replied the juror. "Let your lordship produce the passing boor; if not, the witness at least speaks truth."

"Granted," replied his lordship. "What next, most wondrous seer?"

"Your lordship has forgotten to change your dress since yesterday at twilight, when, in tearing through a thicket, so rough that never human foot, except in wild unrest like yours, would seek its shelter, you tore the wristband of your sleeve, and left the fragment hanging on a bush just where the sodden ground bears three distinct imprints of your advancing footsteps."

"This is too absurd!" cried Lord Ravensworth, starting up with ashy pallor on his cheeks and lips; "am I to be thus insulted?"

"My lord, who injures you?" quietly demanded the coroner.

"Officer, examine his lordship's dress. Nay, you yourself demanded the test of this man's power; and justice requires the test of his truth."

Ashamed to struggle, yet with sullen anger on his brow, Lord Ravensworth had the mortification of disclosing the torn wristband of his shirt, hitherto concealed by his coat sleeve in such a manner that it was impossible the keenest eyes could have detected it. From mere respect to his rank, no remark was made at this seemingly superhuman evidence, slight as it was, of a spirit-police in the midst of the human justice-room; but when, by order of the cor-

oner, servants were despatched to search the thicket, and under the guidance of a map of the way hastily traced out by the improvvisatore, the earl's footprints were found, and measured, and the scrap of torn linen actually discovered hanging, as the seer had described it, in an almost impenetrable part of the thicket — when this, compared with the earl's dress and found to match, was considered, in addition to conclusive testimony that the witness was, at the very time of the occurrence, two hundred miles away, and never could have had an opportunity of visiting the spot in question, and no other footprints than the earl's were found, clearly demonstrating that no human watcher could have passed that spot — the investigation, complex as it appeared to grow from the admixture of the supernatural in its details, gained in interest what it lost in comprehensibility.

"Would that the dead could speak!" exclaimed one of the harassed jurors. "Lieutenant Rossi, could you not tell us something of the lady? some surer token by which we might connect this most mysterious and unhappy death with him whom you accuse?"

"The dead! There are no dead. She lives and stands amongst us." Such was the startling response which fell from the lips of the seer, as, with fixed eyes and rapt, unnatural glare, he seemed to gaze on vacancy.

The twilight was now fast thickening round the court; the waves of gloom seemed pouring over the high carved ceiling of the vast, dim hall; stags' heads and branching antlers loomed from the walls like fabled goblins; the flickering light came fitfully from huge, high Gothic windows, falling on the suits of armor ranged against the panels, until they looked like frowning phantoms of the knights of old, ready to step from their dark recesses, and do bat-

tle for the murdered lady. Around the long hall table, which had so often groaned with the weight of jovial hospitality, sat the twelve grave men, booted and spurred like country squires; and far in the background, the crowd of anxious, terrified domestics, peasants, and retainers of the castle. The folds of a heavy crimson curtain, on the right, fell round the tall and rigid form of Ravensworth, as, with folded arms and lips compressed, he stood like a picture, grim and yet defiant, shrouded in its masses. Opposite to him, a fine, arched, painted window reflected the last gleams of the sinking orb of day. All else was gloom but this one spot; and there, in its golden glory, stood the noble improvvisatore. A halo of yellow and purple light fell on his form; his marble features caught the ruddy glow, and round his lofty brow the refracted rays lingered as in some picture of a saint traced by a Raffaelle's genius. The eager listeners gazing spell-bound on him, bent with straining ears to catch the solemn tones of his sweet but plaintive voice as once more he murmured, "She lives and stands amongst us. Poor broken flower! Unhappy Gabrielle! See, now, she raises her small, pale hand. Alas! one slender finger's broken — bent and disjointed like a bruised reed. *He did it* — Ravensworth — when, with rude and cruel grasp, he tore the plain gold sign of her betrothal from her finger. I see him now, and her, poor, writhing lamb! Her tender hand is disjointed, yet no cry escapes her. My first gift, and my last; what has he done with it? Tell me, fleeting shadow, Gabrielle; O, show me! Where is my ring? — The swamp; — go seek it there. Beneath the third soft footprint, her cruel murderer hid it. My spirit-love, I thank thee! Fare thee well — farewell!"

The spell was over; the seer was silent; and the deeply-

moved jurors resumed their painful task. On further inquiry it was remembered that Lady Ravensworth had worn another plain gold ring, besides her weddding one. This on the corpse was missing; yet although her attendants, Mrs. Martin, and all who had approached her since the night of the alleged tragedy, had failed to remark any thing particular in her right hand — though she had never complained or mentioned the injury to a single creature — upon the suggestion of the above recorded broken sentences, the right hand of the unfortunate lady was examined, when it was found that the third finger had been recently dislocated, while the skin was torn and scathed as if by violence. The discovery of the missing ring, too, just where "the third soft footprint" revealed the presence of the earl in the deep and swampy thicket, completed the chain of this most marvellous evidence. And yet, what did it all amount to?

Lady Ravensworth was dead, poisoned; that was clear. But the old adage, that "the dead tell no tales," was not to be set aside for the ravings of a "crack-brained visionary" — especially when the honor of a rich and noble lord, a statesman, landlord, and a powerful peer, were all to be called in question. What if his lordship did spend the day from noon to eve in wandering in deep thickets, — hiding his lady's former lover's ring, — and late at night returning so abstracted that he left behind him his favorite, fleetest horse, tied to a tree at least some ten miles from the place where he must have wandered on foot? What if ambitious maids of low degree wed haughty lords, and die like blighted flowers — crushed out of life when their purchasers are weary of them? The broken finger, like the poisoned cup, were secrets belonging to eternity. Dreadful only and most presumptuous was that mysterious

power by which the privacy of souls could be unveiled, and the voiceless air reveal the mystery which should slumber with the silent dead.

And thus did *justice* reason, till at last the populace, attracted by the strange reports which every where, like wildfire, spread from the inquest room, began to take a fierce and threatening tone against the unfortunate improvvisatore.

His lordship's lawyers were shrewd and active men. *Of course* they knew, as all the world *must* know, that the Earl of Ravensworth was innocent. They were fully confident no blame, not even the lightest shadow, could attach to a nobleman "so good and so distinguished." But the fact that any foreign vagrants should dare to pry on English noble's privacy — and, worse than all, that they should dare to tell such starling facts that clumsy juries and the common people were forced to believe their truth — this was the most atrocious part of all. At first the villagers, who loved the generous lady, and were deeply struck by the noble bearing of the strange but truthful witness, were sullen and discontented, and instead of rejoicing when they heard that their landlord and patron was fully and "*honorably*" discharged of all blame, by the verdict of the jury — namely, of "*felo de se*," — were disposed to vent their indignation in muttered curses and half-uttered threats. Before the day succeeding the close of the inquest was fully ended, however, the tone of the whole community was changed. The taverns were full; every alehouse for miles around was thronged with drunken revellers; while his lordship's friends, lawyers, men of business and retainers, were every where remarkably busy, haranguing half intoxicated and highly excited listeners, his lordship's gold flowed through the streets like water, and

his lordship's name was cheered and shouted with golden and drunken zeal.

'Twas in the midst of such a scene as this, that late at night the announcement rang like a thunder peal that the strange witness and his companion had been arrested on the charge of "conspiracy." From ten o'clock till nearly twelve, knots of men might be seen standing at the corners of the various streets and lanes that led from the castle (where 'twas said the court was sitting before which the new criminals were being examined) to the village jail, where they might be expected to be detained. 'Twas remembered afterwards, however, how many strangers were abroad that night, — how many, too, that passed from group to group, seeming to whisper something, then pass on; and still the gold, the castle gold, flew through these groups like trash. Why was it that, without any apparent concert or given signal, without a leader or the least attempt, that any could detect, at order or design, the scattered groups, just as the bell chimed midnight, seemed as by some universal impulse to draw towards a common centre — that centre that castle road? On they went, larger and stronger masses, until they lined the path; and though none manifested any special purpose, or spoke of why they gathered in that spot, their silent, concentrated purpose told some understood but hidden meaning more certainly than speech. And there they stood, or seemed to linger rather, in stern but sullen silence, like a brooding thunder storm. On they come; more and yet more they come; and these, too, pause; no questions asked; no other object gained than there to congregate in massive lines and wait. What are they waiting for?

In one of the foremost groups a low whisper might be

heard, from one who seemed almost afraid to trust his voice with the question, "Where is my lady buried? Can you tell?"

"Hush! be still! They come!" was the sharp reply.

A moment's pause, and then the tramp of horsemen and the roll of carriage wheels. The night was very dark, but the foremost horsemen carried pine torches, which for a short space lit up the scene with a dull, red, fiery glare. First rode half a dozen mounted constables; and then a troop of the castle domestics, surrounding two carriages, the first of which contained the magistrates who had been assisting at the late examination, and the second the two Hungarian officers — the presence of a fresh troop of mounted constables surrounding this vehicle clearly intimating that its inmates were prisoners under a judicial escort.

No sooner did this part of the procession come into view by the light of the torches, than the main object of the gathering appeared to be gained. With a yell like that of the wildest savageism, the lingering masses rushed upon the carriage, dashing the horsemen aside, and, either through their feeble resistance, or taking advantage of their astonishment, with shrieks, cries, and execrations of "Down with the wizard!" "Tear the magician into pieces!" strove to obtain forcible possession of the persons of the prisoners.

How far this movement was the result of preconcerted order — whether such order was the arrangement of the desperate earl, bent on the destruction of his dreaded enemy, fearing to let him go free, yet fearing still more to trust him again before a judicial court — or treachery amongst the trained rioters, — the spirit power that reads the human heart alone can tell. 'Twas evident that most

of the villagers, although excited by partial intoxication, were equally unprepared for this savage movement, and indisposed to further it. Most of these drew back in terror, whilst the magistrates and *some* of the constables — not all — proceeded to render prompt assistance to the helpless prisoners. It was amongst the strangers chiefly (some of whom, with slouched hats and besmeared visages, wore the evident appearance of disguise) that the cries and uproar came. It seemed, too, as if they hoped, by shouts, frantic gestures, and an appeal to the superstitious feelings of the people, to goad them to attack the prisoners. The whisperers were nowhere to be seen; but now the effect of their words was clearly to be tested; for while the chiefs of the ruffian mob began to drag the captives from the carriage, and even to attack their defenders with sticks and stones, the villagers (especially those who had been present at the trial) repeatedly exclaimed, "I don't believe one word of it. That fine young fellow only told the truth; and if there's magic in it, 'tis nearer home than with that noble foreigner."

The crowd was divided then; and perhaps a reaction among the better thinking of the mass might not only have protected the prisoners, but even have set them free, when a sudden flash from a distant clump of trees lighted up the scene with a momentary glare — then a loud report — and Ernest Rossi, springing from the ground, fell back on his friend Augustine's arm, his last earth battle fought.

The strife was hushed; a deathly stillness reigned; when in the midst of the affrighted group Lord Ravensworth, white as his dying foe, appeared upon the scene.

"In the name of the king and justice," he cried, without a falter in his loud, harsh tone, "I command you, one and all, to point out to me the man who fired that shot!

Ralph, Morton, Leonard," he added, turning from one to the other in stern appeal, "who was it? Speak! In the name of our liege lord and justice, I require you to yield up the rash, bad man."

Who was to speak? No one had seen the murderer, hidden by the woods; and until the earl appeared upon the scene, although it was natural enough to infer that an uproar so near his castle might have drawn him forth to inquire the cause, still no one had till then remarked him, much less any one amongst the groups was there who carried arms at all. All were silent then, *but one.* Raised upon his faithful friend's strong arm, the dying eyes of Ernest fell full upon the cowering, shuddering earl.

"*She* forgave you, Ravensworth," he murmured, "and so do I. Can you forgive yourself? Augustine, dear companion, faithful friend, farewell! I'm going home, Augustine."

They laid the countess in her stately vault. The deep bell tolled; the midnight torches flashed; the solemn requiem rolled its echoing tones in many a proud cathedral aisle and chapel, in many a solemn priory and convent, in grand high masses for the sainted soul of Countess Gabrielle. The long array of dark funereal pomp consigned her to the splendid mausoleum where Ravensworth's proud ancestry were laid.

They reared a fair white marble tomb above her, with sculptured angels and fine-chiselled arms. They said "she slept beneath." Alas for mortal truth! Her soul was waking in the air of Paradise, and floating through Elysian fields of light with Eulalie and Ernest. Never she in that cold, marble tomb, a risen penitent and humble spirit, lay one hour imprisoned; but like a little child, her spirit life

began from where that cold, white marble closed above her clay.

On the lone hill-side, where, high above the ocean wave, the wild, free sea winds swept, one wretched, heart-wrung mourner followed the humble shell that held the broken casket of the good, the brave, and loving Ernest Rossi. No priest was there to mutter formal prayers. "He needs them not," his lonely comrade thought. "For such as he the heaven of rest was made. His loving lips are pouring forth the waves of song in happier, brighter climes, or immortality is all a fiction."

The mariners who brought him to that shore dug his quiet grave and laid him in it. The wild winds sang his funeral requiem. The lone stars kept their silent watch by night, and fluttering sea-birds hovered near by day. The very daisies loved to cling around the pure and peaceful ashes of the good.

The fishermen and timid village maids, who shrank from mournful churchyards in affright, when evening hours stole on and moonbeams slept upon the gentle minstrel's parting dust, came lovingly and sat upon the stone, and listened through the livelong night to hear the angel music which full often stole in thrilling cadence far across the sea. None thought of him with fear, or heard the air vibrate to viewless minstrel's melting tones when near that grave, with terror. Sometimes they said they saw, when moon and stars made glorious pageantry of summer night, — when all things lovely smiled, and happy thoughts came in the hallowed radiance of such nights, — two glancing forms, more splendid than the dreams of poet's wildest visions, float on the waves of balmy summer air, or gleam like flashing meteors through the night. A third was there, more shadowy, pale, and sad, like the last gleam

of fading morning stars attendant on the lustrous queen of night. They said 'twas Ernest and his spirit bride, leading the soul of Gabrielle, the erring, up to her home in heaven.

NOTE. Since sending the concluding pages of the above sketch to the publishers of "The Spiritual Age," I have been equally perplexed and amused by the receipt of numerous letters, commenting in the spirit of exceeding discontent upon the deaths of my hero and heroine; while two of my correspondents express a hope, almost amounting to a command, that they should see Lord Ravensworth duly consigned to the world's shame, or an equivalent amount of retribution in the inevitable hereafter. To the first class of murmurers, whilst I express my gratification at the interest with which they have followed the story, I beg to remind them of one of its titles, namely, "Torn leaves from *life* history." These leaves, though not all extracted from the same volume, are at least rent from the immutable pages of *life*, where, except in the fictions of novelists or the merely temporal rewards and punishments promised by the Mosaic dispensation, we seldom see real instances of that poetical justice which assigns long life, honor, fame, and wealth as the inevitable results of good action, and fable-like, condemns the tyrant to die, and the bad man to the temporal sufferings of a human tribunal.

Let those who have kindly and lovingly followed my poor Gabrielle and the improvvisatore to the abrupt termination of their earthly career study the facts of spiritualism; and while they simply discover the scene changed, the first rudimental act of the drama alone played out on the stage of mortality, they will have no occasion to mourn for the suffering lady battling unsuccessfully with human passion, being removed, even through the gates of such stormy lessons as she drew on herself, to a more congenial, though of necessity retributive sphere of action. Let them remember *this life is not all.* Here we sow the seed. How few amongst us ever behold the harvest! Yet it does ripen; and we, the sowers, gather it in, here or hereafter — what matters it which? What though the curtain may be dropped between the vision of the mortal and the immortal? The true spiritualist need not be told there is no death; and when earth-life's fitful fever is burnt out, *we know what we are*, by the exact measurement of what we have done. When we can gauge the depths, heights, and breadths of eternity, find out the flood-gates which hedge in the onward waves of progress, and halt before the crystal wall of perfection, we may undertake to say *what we shall be, and no more.* Until then, conceive of the sad, gray, shadowy form of the erring Gabrielle growing brighter and yet more bright, until the glorious vision fades in the rosy sunlight of God's eternal love, in which the spirits, chastened by human suffering, and striving by *persistent effort* to attain the good, are bathed in a flood of glowing sunbeams.

One such as Ernest Rossi lived on earth. He walked amongst men ever like a spirit; and though we missed his kindly tone, his ever-ready smile,

and loving ways, none grudged his soul its early flight to heaven. Kindred with the skies he was ever. Would we had many such! Earth would be a heaven; and such as he would not be called away, as if they found no place in this gross, sensuous life; but in the earth their kindly natures love they'd walk as ministering spirits, instead of whispering through the spirit veil, *as he does now to us.*

Lord Ravensworth—why, who can question what his future was, or doubt that senatorial honor, place, and rank attached like needles to the loadstone wealth? Lord Ravensworth has so many types in life's o'er true page, that it may seem doubtful whether I selected one of the species to individualize, or not; yet I did so, and my peer is a reality, and the leaves of his life history hang fluttering banners of pomp and circumstance upon the honored walls of England's great, even to this very day. Lord Ravensworth held rank as one of England's legislators; he was rich. Who so well qualified to make laws whereby he could grind that wealth from the poor? He was high in station. Who knew so well how many humble rocks he must tread on to constitute the footstool of his greatness? He knew what *crime* was; and so, better than most men, was fitted to legislate for criminals. The world said he had killed his fair and hapless wife; and yet hundreds of fathers, mothers, and guardians sought his alliance for their young and tender daughters. He never married again, however. Thousands there were who would have offered themselves or their children victims upon the shrine of this priest of Mammon; but the high, honorable, wealthy, and influential peer had such a thing as an *individuality*, and into its secret depths mortal eyes never looked again. Some might have guessed at its nature, from the cold chill which his stern presence ever brought, and the loveless life of utter isolation in which the envied child of fortune passed through the busy world. Some wondered why the stately castle always remained untenanted; why its very neighborhood was so studiously avoided by its noble owner; why the sweet voice of music would send the earl to the solitude of distant places, from which he would issue forth with swollen red eyes, that made the beholder's soul run cold to look into their agonizing depths.

Psychometry—it is a favorite theme with me. It brings such hidden wonders to the light, and unveils such a vast scheme of compensation and retribution carried about in the very deepest recesses of the human soul. If love be the kingdom of heaven, how much did Lord Ravensworth carry about with him, when even his very dogs *feared*, but never loved him? Psychometry—what lake of fire couldst thou not have revealed within the bosom of the cold, stern earl, so marble-like in surface, but O, within! Why wilt thou never die, thou worm of memory? Tradition says he offered castle, houses, lands, all his vast wealth, to the physicians who stood around his bed, if they could find the means whereby the long, long life he clung to could be prolonged one single day beyond the waning hour of death, which closed at last around him. Not that he loved that life. He never smiled; and dogs and little children, village maids and pious men, shrank from his path, in that which marked his life—the rule of FEAR. And yet, when earth's thick curtains fell in folds around him, he

shrieked, and screamed for life, and cursed his God, and swore he would not die, — then slept, and, with a start, awoke in spirit land. What was he then? Life and death, like Old Testament teachings, are the novelist's and novel-reader's conceptions of happiness or misery. We know of no end to the one, no meaning for the other. Our world's issues lead us into spirit land; and there, my guides tell me, Lord Ravensworth was nothing more nor less than a very little child, with life to begin again, and no stock to trade on but memory. His wealth and castles, rank and name, were gone. All these, misused, he had invested in the bank of earth, not heaven. With earth the account was closed. He had no funds in heaven, and so he had no interest to receive.

Love — his passion for Gabrielle was a sensuous fire, born of the earth, consuming, like the dust on which it fed. Hate — what could his hate do to his happy rival? Far, far away, amongst the choiring stars, singing to the listening worlds of light, where never sunset comes to dim the eternal day, the bright improvvisatore sped bird-like through all space, linked hand in hand with those he dearest loved — his heaven, to shed the dews of happiness and comfort on those who, like himself, were toiling up to his bright, happy home.

Nothing but memory, then, for Ravensworth. The bitter past, with all its dreadful failures, — rank, wealth, and talent, — all dead, barren trees; possessions, home or place, love, friends or kindred, he'd none in spirit land. He had not sent his treasures on before, but left them all behind; and so he stood once more a little child, the memory of the past his sole possession, the fatherhood of God his only hope. *Only hope!* The wisdom that can make a thousand worlds — the love that destines them for happiness, and power that can sustain them — is it not sufficient for a single soul's salvation? The new-born spirit of the hapless child of earth came wailing back into his Father's bosom, and forth was sent again to practise life anew — the lessons of the past a constant teaching; the loving angels growing good themselves by helping on the wanderer to his home; and one strong arm around his feeble frame, one bold, unerring footstep guiding his, one tender voice in soothing accents saying, "Brother, fear not; one God and Father made us, one common tie unites us all — 'tis love. You've died to sin, now live again to God." The voice that spoke was Ernest's, the improvvisatore. Perfection was not his, nor any finite being's; and when the angels bend in solemn worship, and ask the Father of all spirits to teach them to be good, a voice from out the heaps of buried Zion quivers on Calvary's mount, and sighs through Palestine, mounts on the winds, and breathes at heaven's gate; sings through each star and glitters in each sun, writes on the walls of all created worlds and echoes through all space — "Forgive each other's trespasses as ye would be forgiven."

THE WITCH OF LOWENTHAL.*

DEEP in the heart of the thick, umbrageous masses which constitute the Black Forest of Bohemia stands a deserted and crumbling pile of buildings, once famous as the residence of the powerful Barons Von Lowenthal. Birds of night and evil flitting things alone find shelter beneath the once stately roof. The broken door and moss-grown steps still give entrance to the noble hall, where fair dames and princes were wont to feast in all the boisterous revelry of a German baronial wassail; but the painted arches no longer reëcho the merry laugh and jovial song, and the springing step of the dancer will never again tread a measure on the fading mosaic of the silent banqueting room.

The most perfect portion of the forsaken old pile is a beautiful little chapel, situated in the rear of the building,

* This story, communicated to the *Spiritual Age*, in 1858, is no coinage of the brain. It is one of the innumerable evidences extant occurring within the last century in Germany, there recorded, and its main facts attested by history, proving how long and earnestly spirits have been seeking to attract our attention, and awaken the conviction to our minds that the dead were raised, and could, under favorable conditions, commune with earth. The sacrifice of this and other victims, too, upon the altar of superstition and ignorance, only proves that those who have had charge of the minds, souls, and intellects of the masses, fly from evil rather than resist it; and where they are too ignorant to understand, and too idle or fearful to investigate a problem, they undertake to solve it by a mental or physical crucifixion.

surrounded by a shady and peaceful cloister, where the golden sunbeams stream through the painted windows, lighting up the pure white marble of the monuments within, like the uncertain tints of many-hued gems. Here the breeze faintly stirs, through rifts in the broken walls, the tattered banners, once prideful emblems of the prowess of the Barons of Lowenthal. Here pompous elegies set forth the mighty achievements of their warriors, and the calm, cold faces of marble saints look down, in the deep mystery of their eternal silence, on the vacant stalls where once the lowly worshipper sought to read in their immobile features his own destiny for weal or woe.

The charm of the place, and the only signs which redeem this score of ghostly legends and evil memories from the chilling influence of utter desolation, are two exquisitely sculptured female figures, as large as life, and occupying so prominent a position in the little sanctuary as to show that they were chief features in the history of the surrounding scene. They represented two young and beautiful women, with faces no less dissimilar than their attitudes were striking. The one was evidently bound to a stake, and though the sculptor had simulated with wondrous skill the leaping flame already curling around her form, he had preserved in the upturned features of the victim an expression of passionate enthusiasm, so wondrously sublime, that she seemed an embodiment of the spiritual, triumphing over the keen agony of death in its most terrible shape.

The second figure knelt beside the stake, her hair dishevelled, her garments rent, her straining eyes upturned in frantic despair, and her hands wreathed above her head till the swelling veins seemed ready to burst their marble prison, and testify to the Promethean fire of life which the

sculptor's art had drawn down from heaven to animate his superb monument.

In these statues the final destiny of the house had been typified. Its history was here ended, and the secret of its desolation revealed; the sculpture itself stood at the head of a large slab of pure white marble, which was simply inscribed, "To the memory of Clara, last Baroness of Lowenthal." From the various legends in currency respecting the fate of the subjects of these sculptures, we gather the following sketch.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, a young Englishman of noble family, but broken fortunes, who had been sent abroad in the hope of improving a fascinating exterior and accomplished manners into fortune by marriage with some wealthy heiress, happened to meet at a fashionable watering place with the Baron Franz Von Lowenthal. The baron was a widower, had the reputation of being immensely rich, and blessed with an only daughter. The heiress, although living in strict seclusion, was said to be very beautiful; and as the baron appeared to form a sudden and violent attachment to the young Englishman, it was in visions of a union with a paragon of beauty and wealth in perspective, that the handsome adventurer yielded to the baron's pressing solicitations that he would visit his Castle of Lowenthal. Arrived there, all his wildest imaginings seemed realized. The castle was superb, the hunting superlative, the wine incomparable; but above all, the heiress more beautiful than the rising sun, and more mild, coy, yet loving, than the tender beams of a summer moon.

"By Heaven, she is mine already!" ejaculated the bold fortune-hunter, as, on the third day of his residence at the castle, the compliant father began to joke him upon the

sympathy apparently existing between the tastes and habits of the young couple, while the equally complaisant daughter sighed, blushed, and said nothing.

It certainly did not escape the observation of the Englishman, that the whole proceeding seemed strongly to savor of the fact of his being brought there simply for the purpose of having a young, very lovely, and very wealthy bride almost thrust upon him. The young man had, as younger son of one of England's marquisates, a sounding title; but so had the young baroness: she retained that title too, and the empty English ladyship could add nothing to her rank. Even the grossest egotism could not attribute both father and daughter's marked predilection to their stranger guest simply to infatuation with his excellences; there must be a secret somewhere, and it was not without sundry misgivings lest the said secret was, or might prove to be, the largest part of the strange destiny thus thrust upon him, that he tendered his hand after three short weeks' acquaintance, and was, both by father and daughter, almost immediately accepted.

In addition to the doubts which this too ready compliance forced upon him, was one circumstance in connection with his beautiful betrothed, which greatly disconcerted him. From the very first moment of their acquaintance, he had never been able to converse with her *alone*. A young lady, whom the baroness called her foster sister, was her constant companion; and despite of all the hints and innuendoes of the bridegroom elect, she never attempted for one moment to quit her post beside the lady. She was young, very beautiful, and, as far as perfect silence and apparently perfect abstraction went, she never appeared to be a check on the lovers; aware, however, that she was neither deaf nor absolutely blind, Lord L. frequently felt as

much provoked as perplexed at what he called her intrusive pertinacity.

The wedding day at length arrived, however, and though the silent, phantom-like Gertrude was a necessary appendage to all the day's movements, the husband triumphantly reflected that the hour of this triune association must at length cease. Great, therefore, was his chagrin, and even indignation, when he found that even in the bridal chamber itself, a veiled alcove had been set apart for the occupation of the inseparable companion. Remonstrances, prayers, and even threats were resorted to by the incensed bridegroom in vain. The young baroness declared, with floods of tears, that she had never been separated from her foster sister from her birth — that her very *life* depended on her presence, and that if, in short, the trinity must be broken up, the separation must be between the married, not the single pair.

Finding both bride and friend, and, stranger still, the father, too, inflexible, the puzzled lord had to endure this now hated companionship as best he could.

The young baroness protested that from a child she had always been vastly terrified of "evil spirits;" many were known to linger round the castle; strange sights and flitting forms had been seen within its halls and chambers; low moans and dismal noises, too, were heard; the tables moved unbidden, doors shut and opened; and, as *witches* were known to be abroad, and many trials in this very district had lately given victims to the flames, so the lady argued that Gertrude, by her superior sanctity and courage, had ever been her shield against this much dreaded influence, and must continue still, unless her lord desired to part with her or lose her life.

Unsatisfactory as this explanation was, the young man

soon began to find it had some foundation, at least, to rest upon, for ere long his sleep was broken night after night by sounds most clearly superhuman in their origin. His room seemed to be filled by a whole legion of unseen rappers, — windows, walls, and doors were broken with concussions from invisible agencies, — pattering feet were heard in every gallery, hall, and stairway, while flitting lights, and ghostly, shadowy forms, stood like unquiet phantoms, as they were, within his very chamber, crossed his path, and seemed like guests familiar in the house, sometimes more like its masters than himself. And now he found that day by day the domestics disappeared, and though fresh ones supplied their places, these never staid above a week, all urging the house was fairly haunted, not by one, but legions of evil spirits.

The unfortunate Englishman now began to perceive some deeper meaning in his hasty union than yet had met his darkest thought. The house was not only haunted, but possessed with a *legion* — that was clear. All the wild stories of midnight spectres and apparitions of terror with which the age was teeming, seemed to gain dreadful credence in this awful mansion. After anxious search and long consultation with his wife and father, he announced his unalterable intention of quitting the castle at once, insisting, with a husband's privilege, that his wife should accompany him. Instead of complying with the readiness of relief to avoid such a home of terror, he found he had to resort to the sternest authority before he could succeed in removing her from her phantom-ridden home. He soon found that the place was deserted by the neighbors on account of its evil reputation; and the utter loneliness consequent upon a reputation which he now discovered, for the first time, to be generally notorious, was another cogent

reason for his determination to abandon the castle. Great, however, was his consternation to learn that his new abode was subject to precisely the same torment as before. Groans, and shrieks, and cries of hideous cadence broke each midnight stillness; and though he moved from house to house, and town to town, go where he would, the wretched haunted man was still pursued by this dread spectral band.

Worn out at last, and pondering whether life or wealth was worth preserving at this dreadful price, — although he loved his fair and gentle wife, — he felt that he must die or quit her. Some mystery terrible was wrapped around her. *She was the cause; it followed in her track*, unless — and lo! the sunlight seemed to break upon his darkened mind ——

"Good God!" he cried, "it is that fatal girl! *She is a witch* — these spectres her companions — these sounds their dreadful Sabbath rites performed within our hearing nightly."

The wondrous influence, too, she had acquired over his wife seemed now all fully accounted for. Without a word to any of the unhappy family with whom he had wedded, — assured that both father and daughter were equally under the influence of the dreadful spell, — he hastened off to the nearest magistrate, and ere another sundown his case was told, listened to with eager credulity by the horror-stricken agents of the law, and warrants instantly granted for the arrest of the accused.

The Englishman, finding how readily his story was listened to, and how many similar cases the magistrates had lately been called upon to deal with by fagot and flame, rejoiced in the hope that, once freed from the fascinating presence of the "witch," the spell would be

broken, and his wife, fast becoming now all precious to his heart, would soon be reconciled to her tormentor's fate. He purposed, therefore, to conduct the arrest with as much privacy as possible; but in this he reckoned without remembering his host was "*a witch.*" He found the unhappy ladies — by some inconceivable agency apprised of his whole proceeding — locked in each other's arms, and, with the bitterest tokens of grief, resolute in their purpose that nothing but brutal violence should tear them asunder.

On every other point than Gertrude's presence, Lord L. had found his Clara gentle, complying, plastic as the wind. Now all was changed; her rage and frantic exclamations of reproach broke through all bounds; and when at length she sobbed herself to silence upon her companion's breast, her wretched husband pleaded they might be both removed, locked in each other's arms, into one cell, to save her very life. The exigency of the case, and the high rank of the sufferers, hastened the tardy movements of justice, and the accused was placed at the bar on trial for witchcraft, a few hours after her arrest.

For the first time in his life, Lord L. now looked on Gertrude without dislike; nay, with an admiration compelled by her tranquil air, her still and lofty courage, her statue-like composure, moveless dignity, her noble head, and Grecian-chiselled face, her lustrous eyes, with that strange look of distance which seemed to stray away to that far world from which she well might come — so spirit-like, unearthly, beautiful she looked. All these impressed their magic spell on every gazer's mind. Beside her stood, like some pale, broken flower, the wretched wife; beneath her veil, her dim eyes, red with weeping, looked out imploringly on every face, like a doomed captive soliciting for pity. None who gazed on that wistful, woful face, con-

trasted with the noble, lofty calmness of her unmoved companion, but mistook the captive for the free. The baron himself stood near the pair with downcast eyes and heaving breast, like one borne down by sorrow.

No defence was made; alas! 'twas useless. As they stood in court, the thundering knockings and the wildering shrieks of unseen agents seared each living soul with the deep brand of terror's scorching flame. The desk, the chairs, and benches, all seemed living. They reeled and rocked without a human hand to touch them, and the scene bore witness to the dreadful truth. The air was all alive with viewless things; the scared and livid witnesses shrunk off; the judge, aghast, and all the shivering court, pronounced the hasty sentence — death by flame — death, speedy death; the very earth was burdened whilst this most fearful sinner lived upon it.

The sentence spoken, one wild shriek was heard — two white arms tossed in air — the wretched Clara fell. Her husband bore her prostrate form away. One deep, low groan — the baron's heart seemed broken. The captive simply smiled, and whispered low, "Courage, my father; as I've lived I'll die."

That night the wretched lady spent beside her friend. The prison walls never echoed to sobs so heart-wrung as those which burst from Baroness Clara's lips. Overwhelmed at her grief, shocked at an agony which was past his comprehension, Lord L. drew his father-in-law aside, and, whilst the unhappy daughter wept her heart away, he thus addressed him: —

"May God forgive you, baron, if you've wronged me. The misery my conduct seems to have brought upon this family has all arisen, as yourself must see, from suffering me to thus become your son. 'Twas not in mortal power

to live with this dread haunting; and what could urge you to seek for my alliance, and, having formed it, to force this loathsome, weird companionship on Clara and myself? I do, in Heaven's name, bid you now disclose."

"Have, then, your wish," replied the sorrowful baron. "I sought a worthy husband for my child, and pitched on you, because you were a *stranger* — none *knowing* would have married her. From infancy till now *she's been the witch;* poor Gertrude has borne *the name* and shame."

"False, loathed deceiver!" cried the Englishman; "can this be true?"

"As true as Heaven," replied the unhappy father. "None would believe my tale; 'tis one I cannot, dare not scarce believe myself. These sounds and sights from childhood have pursued her. From place to place I took her like one possessed. The dreadful secret I never dared disclose, fearing the doom of witchcraft on the child; and yet I know her guiltless. What dreadful fate possesses her and me, God only knows. This Gertrude was our pastor's only child; the story told to him, and known to her, induced the noble, generous girl, my Clara's earliest, truest friend, to live with her and dare the shame and blame, should any question whence the terror came. My hope in marriage was, that she might conquer, through your alliance, this evil haunting, or that you would protect her. Gertrude would first your wrath and anger bear, and so the timid, fearful child consented, that for a while she should appear the source whence all this shocking following seemed to come. And now — O God of heaven! — you know the fearful truth; and my tender lamb must perish in the flames."

"Not so," the writhing husband hoarsely murmured. "She is your child; whate'er her fearful crimes, God's

hand, not ours, is heavy on her now. She is my wife — beloved, adored by me. She must not, shall not die! I cannot lose her! Almighty Father, O, forgive the wrong! The *witch* must live, the *innocent* must die!"

From far and wide, from mountain, forest, glen, town, village, hamlet, thousands on thousands came to see the famous Witch of Lowenthal expiate her fearful crime by fire. The sun that day glared like a huge, red ball of angry fire. The distant thunder boomed, and, flashing fire, shivered the pine trees in the thick, black woods. Hoarsely the sighing winds swept over the hill on which the witch's funeral pile was built. In virgin white the noble victim came, her head sublime with constant faith erect; her foot was firm; her sternly-chiselled lips moved not nor parted till the white-robed priest, with agonizing prayer, held up the cross, and bade her, on its all-atoning emblem, confess her crime, and speed her soul to grace.

Taking the cross, with simple piety, she whispered, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

On holy Stephen's face there never shone a look more shining, angel light more pure, than on that dying martyr girl's white brow. To Heaven her full soul, in her lustrous eyes, looked out; her brave and sinless life she freely gave to save the timid one whom she called friend — whom, more than all the world, she knew to be the real cause of all. In shame and mystery she'd lived to guard her — in fire and agony she died to save her. To save her! No, to meet with her in heaven. Ere high the ascending flames had wreathed her head, like some old saint of old, with halo of great light, the wretched wife laid down her golden head upon her husband's strong, supporting arm — one look upon her friend, her father, heaven, — one moment given to sigh the name of Gertrude, the next her fluttering

spirit oped the gate of that bright land of souls whereto her hand gave the first welcome to the enfranchised soul of her most wronged and yet most happy victim.

"My Gertrude, friend! — my martyred saint, come home!"

"My sister Clara, art thou there before me?"

The gates of light wide opened to admit them, while spirit legions thronged to meet the victims of superstitious error, ignorance, and wrong.

They laid the noble baroness in state — *bewitched* e'en unto death, the story ran — beneath the splendid marble which recalled her fate; and by her crumbling form two sorrowing men, in secret, and at midnight's lone, still hour, placed a small crystal vase, enclosed with pearls, containing but a few black gathered ashes — one long, black tress, with one fair curl inwove — and on the golden lid they carved out "GERTRUDE."

THE PHANTOM MOTHER,

OR THE STORY OF A RECLUSE.*

WHEN I was last in England, I visited an old lady of retired habits, and quiet, unobtrusive manners, who resided in a very remote locality in the wilds of Cumberland. The cheerful benignity of her temper, and the calm piety with which she contemplated her rapidly approaching end, bespoke a pilgrimage of nearly ninety years, which endured the retrospect of a virtuous mind. Her little cottage, deeply embosomed amid the majestic pine-clad hills of that district, was in summer nearly hidden by the clustering wilderness of roses, clematis, and star-shaped jasmine which luxuriated around the latticed casements. Every where the senses were regaled with the choicest airs, laden with the richest perfume of flowers, and melodious with the hum of restless bees and the tranquil songs of many birds, happy in the security of a retreat where benevolence protected the tiny songsters from molestation in summer and starvation in winter.

I love the neighborhood of flowers and birds; it evidences a refined taste and a generous nature — the love of the beautiful, and humane care of the weak; and I have many a time stood in that little wilderness of perfume while the liquid tones of the pathetic songster of the grove, the lonely nightingale, poured her flood of melody through the

* Written for the "*Christian Spiritualist*," in 1857.

deep silence, and the silver blossoms of the midnight sky looked down in glittering radiance over shining flower-beds, until I fancied I could trace the angel inhabitants of those remote worlds of mystic light winging their airy flight to the only earthly scenes with which their purified natures could have any real sympathy; namely, the sinless warblers of the woods, and the many tinted jewels that adorn the face of nature, her regalia of trees and flowers.

The mistress of this little region of melody and sweets was an early friend of my family's; and although, as I have before stated, the shadow of the tomb was on every footprint of her daily life, her cheerful and genial benevolence drew around her the young and loving, no less than the sick and needy, who were dependent on her bounty. I had often heard that she had been a belle in her youth, eminently beautiful; and, in common with many others, I felt some surprise that she should not have shared the fate of two of her sisters, who, though they had long since passed away, were still celebrated as having, by their charms and fascinations, won the hearts and shared the fortunes of two of the proudest nobles of the country side. I one day expressed my surprise on this point to my hostess, hinting, as delicately as I could, a desire to learn why she had, for a period of so many years, withdrawn herself from the great world of which report and the records of some very fine portraits of her early youth declared that she would have been so bright an ornament. Instead of censuring me for my impertinent curiosity, my venerable hostess simply replied, —

"My dear child, I withdrew from a world in which I found I was not to be trusted."

"How, my dear madam?"

"Understand me," rejoined my friend. "The world

never had any other conquest over me than such as it gains over thousands of young and guileless hearts; but when I came to learn what the *actual* nature of its temptations was, I repeat again, the *mighty knowledge* was too much for me; and finding I could make for myself less arduous duties in a sphere totally opposed to my newly-understood responsibilities, I came to live in this place sixty years ago, and have remained here ever since."

"I am totally at a loss to comprehend the meaning of your words," I replied. "You speak of a *mighty knowledge* and heavy responsibilities: were they, then, the result of some great calamity, or terrible temptation, to which you became more subject even than your beautiful sisters?"

The old lady did not answer my question for some moments; at last she sighed, gazed wistfully on the purple glories of the western sky, and with flower-laden breezes fanning our cheeks, and the last evening song of the blackbird keeping mournful cadence to my old friend's plaintive tones, she related to me the following incident in her own early life:—

"Sixty years ago," she began, "I was said to be beautiful; but imagine what combination of exterior charms you will, they would all fall short of the loveliness which shone in the far-famed beauty of my mother.

"I can remember even now the expression which a contemplation of her fair face would fill me with. I used to think there was nothing in earth or nature half so admirable; and though I never loved her, (for she was neither a domestic wife nor a fond mother,) I almost worshipped the external form, which excited in my mind (ever keenly susceptible to the beautiful) a perfect idolatry of her appearance.

"One Christmas she had gone from home, as usual, to

blaze amid the splendors of court balls in town. She had been absent about a week, and her return was not expected for at least a month to come. My sisters had gone to a ball, and I had just returned home from a very gay party. Tired and weary as I was, I dismissed my maid, and sat down, according to custom, to look over my list of engagements for the following day, love-letters, and other similar trash, which I usually digested before retiring to my midnight slumbers.

"It was late, and I was gathering up my papers in a heap, intending to put them by until another time, when my chamber door was opened noiselessly, and, to my unspeakable astonishment, my mother herself entered my room, and, without holding out her hand or attempting to salute me, took a chair and sat down by the fire on the opposite side to myself. If I was astonished at her unexpected appearance, I was still more so at the extraordinary change which that appearance presented. It was one of complete disorder. Her dress (a splendid lace which she had recently purchased) gave me the idea of a cold so intense, that my very marrow froze when I looked at her naked arms and shoulders; and I felt, although she did not shiver, that she was perishing with cold. Her hair was loose and hanging in disorder round her head, and I saw, to my amazement, quantities of false curls, ill arranged, and scarcely concealing the gray locks which were distinctly visible amidst them. One cheek was coarsely patched with rouge, the other was deadly pale; a set of false teeth was in her hand, and her face was besmeared with half-arranged pearl powder. I had never seen my mother at her toilet; and the disclosures of the present dishabille shocked and disgusted me. Yet all this, all, all was forgotten, totally overlooked, in the expressions of unutterable woe

which sat upon every lineament of that most miserable face. I have never, never seen despair, grief, rage, remorse, so awfully depicted on a human face, nor did I deem it possible that such passions could find so tremendous a representation. I seemed to see, moreover — and wonderful it was for me to see it — my mother's past history all written, I could not tell how or where, yet carried about her, and obvious to every eye. And, O my God! may I never again witness the naked deformity of an ill-spent life thus vividly shadowed out.

"Aghast and speechless, I listened in silence while my mother spoke to me; but her very tones were changed, and instead of the liquid, flowing accents of other days, her voice was hollow, faint, and weak, and seemed to come from an illimitable distance off, and in no way to proceed from the dismal figure who sat before me. It said, —

"'O Alice, I have come to tell you of a very, very terrible dream I have had, a dream you ought to know, and one which, if I had realized *before*, I should have been happier — happier now!'

"She sighed — and, O, what a sigh was there! — then, motioning to the writing-table beside me, she bade me take down the words she was going to speak. Mechanically I obeyed her, when she continued as follows, speaking so slowly, and with so many pauses, that, though I never seemed to possess the courage to address her, I was enabled to transcribe her words faster than she uttered them: —

"'I was dressing, as you see, to go to court, when a sudden faintness seized upon me; memory fled, and consciousness only returned in the form of this horrible vision.'

"Here a shudder of agony seemed to shake her frame, and a long pause ensued ere she resumed.

"'I found myself on the brink of one of those dreary chalk cliffs which overhang the sea at B. The air was thicker and heavier than night, yet it was not night. All was lonely, and wild, and dreary; and it seemed as if I had stood in that awful solitude for many ages, yet without the affinity which belonged to the scene. Why or how I came there I knew not; yet I felt very, very fearful of — I knew not what. Suddenly the ground cracked, parted, and rocked beneath my feet. Shrieking in agony, I caught at the earth, the blades of grass, the dancing motes of the atmosphere, to stay my fall — in vain! Down, down I was hurled! O, how long I was falling! Surely I must have spent many years in that eternal descent, for the whole of my past life, even to its minutest details, passed in solemn march before me as I fell. Not the vivid flashes of thought in which distant objects shimmer and then pass like bubbles, but rolling masses of years, unfolding in clear panoramas as marked as the days and hours in which they were enacted. I saw my own pale mother, sinking into her early grave; but the bitter causes of that untimely death came with her — *my* disobedience, my unnatural desertion, ay, every unkind word, sneer, frown, or forgotten folly, which I had ever committed against her, was piled up into the funereal pall from which her faded form seemed to be emerging.

"'I saw dim effigies of young and buoyant hearts, which my idleness and coquetry had broken. I saw the numberless and bounteous gifts with which God had endowed me — the charms of beauty, music, poetry, and wit, fluttering around me like butterflies of glorious hues; then, coiling about my fellow-men, they suddenly changed into serpent wreaths, whose sting brought every where death and ruin, and ate, with the venomed tooth of vain remorse, into my

own despairing heart. I saw faces of weary drudges whom I had sacrificed to my vanity; while many a mocking image of those I had known on earth reviled at me with foul grimaces for the degrading disclosures of my unfinished toilet.

"'This, and more, much more, I knew, felt, and saw during my tremendous fall. I tell you, girl, a thousand years must have passed in that flight. At length I landed — landed on a distant strand, where still the thick haze clouded my straining vision, and the cold mists breathed around me with icy folds, such as I had never dreamed of even in thought before. As I shrank and quivered beneath their sweep, myriads of ragged forms flitted before me, such as I had seen in my town drives; and then I wept that I had not done something to alleviate their distress — but, O me, they were but shadows! — they passed away, and visions of a far distant and very bright land swam at times through the haze, revealing to me the reality of *their* life, and the bitter exchange they had made with me. Lies and trivial follies, which I had long forgotten, seemed now to assume a shape so tangible, that I felt with shame and horror they were tracing themselves upon my garments, my brow, my very cheeks and hands. I strove to conceal myself from the gaze of those upon whom I distinctly read similar evidences of past misdeeds; but all at once I felt as if I had *no body*, and that my spirit, being that which had conceived my actions, received their impression before they were given forth, and consequently took the exact form, not only of my earthly shape, but of my every deed, thought, or action upon earth.

"'Then arose the wild, agonizing wish to change myself. I screamed aloud, that I must go back to earth, and lead a new life, and reform in spirit. I told those who surrounded

me, I knew I was not fit to be seen; that I must do better —I would do better; that I had never been taught, and that God was not so cruel as to condemn me to this torture for my ignorance. Then came a horrible dark figure, shadowing forth the image of a priest I had known on earth; he told me I had had the teachings of the church. I looked on him *as he was*—I knew him for a hypocrite, and a sinner, and turned away in loathing. I asked for redemption —the blood of Jesus Christ to wash away my sins, and make me tolerable even in my own eyes. I looked up and saw the terrible vision of the crucifixion, while these words rung like thunder in my ears: "Not every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, but he who *doeth* the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall be saved." Then I cried in despair, Is there then no salvation? Again the shout was reëchoed, "Work out your own salvation." But how? "By action." Is there then repentance after death? "*There is no death*," was thundered in my ears; and although the voice that cried was so still and small that its vibrations would not have stirred an aspen leaf, yet did it seem to fill the whole space of creation, like the peal of the last trump. Confused, overwhelmed with the new ideas that thronged upon me, the bitter retribution for acts too small to be graven on the tablet of memory, the possibility of progress and atonement beyond the grave, I asked, in the agony of despair, Where then is hell? No voice replied; but I looked on the woful figures around me, on my own deformed spectre, stamped with the impress of a misspent life, on the murky atmosphere, made thick by the breath of crime, the dismal landscape created by my own actions, and the associates to whom my own earthly loves had now affinitized me, and I said, *Lo! I am in "hell," and I myself have made it.*

"'Then I thought of, but did not dare to ask, for heaven; but, ah me! Thought in spirit life is action, deed, reality; and with the thought came a view! I may not speak of the radiant vista that one brief glance presented. The brightest imaginings of earth are poor compared to the happy spheres of life and progress which dawn on the pure and holy, in their second stage of life. I saw them arise from earth, — the school of the spirit, — the poor and lowly, the beggar and the cripple, starved, naked, and hungry, with the prizes of suffering and merit in their hands; and the worlds of light that unfolded to their view would have been cheaply purchased by ages of such suffering as they had endured on earth. But me, alas! the while, no dark mementoes of crime were branded on my forehead, yet the sins of omission were every where around me — pride and vanity, wasted talents, perverted gifts, the hell of a misspent life; and when I saw the deserts I had to tread, — when I perceived that to attain to any condition of enjoyment superior to that of my present retribution, I must begin life anew, and even as a little child, undo the past by a new future, — I sighed in heaviness of spirit, and cried aloud, with Milton's fallen angel, — "Me miserable!"

"'One ray of light alone seemed to penetrate the thick gloom of my self-created hell — I might yet return to earth, and warn my children, — the neglected human souls committed to my charge, — tell them that not in the church, in the pulpit, in another's merit, or unpractical faith, but in their own acts and deeds, in every footprint they make, in every word they speak, in every step they take, or leave undone, — do they create the heaven or hell to which their spirits are as infallibly

tending, as is their mortal frame to the clod of the earth!'

"She ceased, and I, gaining self-possession from the cessation of the agonizing tones which had so long rung in my ear, cried out, 'O mother, tell me one thing more; in the name of God, tell me how and when you came here!'

"Raising my eyes as I spoke, I sought to meet her glance; but I gazed on vacancy — the empty chair alone remained — the pen, ink, the wet writing, and the fearful tale disclosed, were the only mementoes I ever after retained of that awfully thrilling scene. My sisters, on their return from the ball, found me insensible. I told my tale of horror to incredulous and sneering ears; and when, for weeks after, a raging fever consumed my memory, the whole flitted indistinctly before me as the visions of delirium only. Not so when, on my recovery, I learned that my unhappy mother had actually expired on the very selfsame night, and hour, of my terrible vision. She had been found, they said, sitting at her toilet, half dressed, but covered with blood — the sudden rupture of a vessel had robbed her of life in the very hour when she was preparing to insnare all hearts in the meshes of her *unreal charms*. The corpse, I learned, had been found with a set of false teeth in her hand, one cheek highly rouged, and the other wearing the hue of the banner of corruption.

"My manuscript was long secreted from me; at length I found it, on the death of one of my sisters, although I needed not its awful witness to the vision I had seen, every word of which was engraved on my memory like the red-hot brand of an immortal fire! And its effects have been, to drive me into this seclusion, where

I have — by God's merciful permission — spent this life happily, in preparing myself and my associates for the next."

The main facts of the above narrative are drawn from the wondrous page of real life history.

HAUNTED HOUSES.—No. 1.

THE PICTURE SPECTRES.*

NO subject connected with the philosophy of spirit communion presents more remarkable points of interest for the speculative and curious, or more serious appeal for investigation to the humanitary and reasoning spiritualist, than the vexed question of "haunted houses." I shall not offer you any of the attempts to solve the mysteries attending these indisputable evidences of independent spirit intelligence, which from time to time have been presented to me by various communications from the world of causes itself; but I will, if acceptable to yourself and your readers, offer you a few sketches of well-authenticated facts, which have come immediately before the range of my own observation in Europe; always premising that I give only such cases as have come within the circle of reliable acquaintances, and that in all narratives where names are suppressed, I am ready to afford *personally* such information as will enable each one to investigate for himself the details thus presented.

One of the oldest palatial residences now in existence in England is the far-famed castle of the earls of what I shall call Z. It is one of the very few remains of the architecture of the earliest periods, in perfect repair. Bastion and tower, donjon and keep, all remain in the

* Written for "*The Spiritual Telegraph*," in 1857.

same feudal condition of ancient grandeur as when monarchs were alternately its guests and captives; when the Norman tyrant and the Red King caroused beneath its stately arches, and the wassail-bowl sent forth its wreathing mist amidst the shouts of Plantagenet huntsmen and Yorkist leaguers. There are many acres of noble woods, lawns, and meadows around this fair domain, and wild and harrowing are the tales which people the mighty oaks and giant elms with the midnight spectres of the old castle, and its legions of phantom knights and ladies. Old men tell of hideous sounds, borne on the night winds, echoing through the deep solitudes of forest and grove. Children and faint-hearted women flit fearfully through the old domain after the first gray shadows of twilight close around its noble walls, and stern history records its iron register of mighty wrong and mighty woe, stamping its illegible memories upon hall and bower, rampart and tower. We cannot pause to describe this noble pile, or linger amidst the thousand and one fascinating traditions, which cling to every waving leaf of its clustering ivy. It must suffice that we call attention to certain points of its construction, necessary to the understanding of what follows.

The castle is surrounded by a wide terrace some quarter of a mile square each way, enclosing the entire file of buildings, with all its inner and outer courts; on one side of this square are situated the offices of the domestics, while the kennels of one of the most celebrated pack of hounds in the country occupy the rear square to these offices. Within the castle is a magnificent picture gallery, containing a famous collection both of works of art and family portraits of all periods, from the time of the founders of the castle, at the period of the Norman Conquest, down to the present day. Of course many of these pictures have

but a legendary title, and some amongst them can only be identified by the period of their costumes, or some collateral evidence of their names and rank.

There are two pictures in this fine collection, however, which defy any speculation on the part of the present proprietors to christen or identify. There is not even the shade of a legend in existence as to whom they were intended to represent, or how they came to hold a place in the stately gallery of the royal and aristocratic dead.

The family now in possession, being the direct descendants of the first founders of the castle, are unable to account for their being found in their possession; and, holding the conservative opinion that their noble ancestry live again in the exclusive dignity of their pictorial associations, they have been accustomed to condemn the unknown strangers to their own solitary companionship. This is by no means an undignified one, however; for the one picture represents a strikingly handsome noble of the time of Henry VII., while the other images a splendidly-attired dame of a period at least two centuries later. The portrait of the lady is the most interesting of the two. I have never seen it, but it has been described to me by one of its owners as depicting a singularly marked and malign countenance, with traces of extreme sorrow, and yet "*vengeance*" in the expression; tears on the cheek, admirably painted; a dagger in one hand, and a timepiece in the other. The picture is wonderfully expressive of deep meaning, and a story by no means terminated, as is evidenced by the attitude of woe and evident anticipation in which the figure stands. The fact of both of these portraits being unknown has led to the solecism of associating them together, although their costumes evidence that they are portraits of persons who must have existed at different and remote periods.

On a certain fine autumnal night, about five and twenty years ago, five of the maid-servants, occupied in the laundry of the castle, prepared to dress themselves some two hours before daybreak, with a view of making arrangements for a customary six weeks' wash. They had been much disturbed during the night with the unusual baying of the hounds, whose kennels (as we before stated) were situated at the square of the castle, opposite to the domestics' apartments. Among this highly-trained pack, such sounds were so unusual that the girls speculated upon the probability of their being occasioned by the death of one of the keepers, sporting dogs being, as is well known, painfully affected by the presence of the "grim destroyer."

As the night was remarkably fine, and the moon shone through the diamond panes of the windows with brilliant radiance, the maids did not strike a light to dress by, and one of them opened and leaned out of the window to enjoy the tranquil beauty of the scene. She soon drew in her head, however, calling to her companions to come and look at the people walking on the terrace below. This they did, and the whole party, five in number, distinctly beheld in the strong, clear light of the moon, shining with a lustre little inferior to daylight, a lady and gentleman arm in arm, very slowly parading on the terrace below, and evidently passing from one corner of the castle to the farther one.

The walk, as we have stated, is about a quarter of a mile in length, and, as the couple moved on in slow and stately march, the astonished party above had full five minutes in which to make their observations; and these assured them that they were looking upon no members of the household, nor any faces they had ever before beheld. On the contrary, the features of each were disagreeable, pale, and, as

the girls all declared, repulsive to look upon. Their dresses were "strange," and, upon their subsequent examination, were accurately described as tallying in every detail with the remarkable pictures to which allusion has been made.

At the end of the straight walk on that side of the castle the figures turned the corner and disappeared; but while the maidens remained in wonder and speculation for some time at the windows, watching for the possible reappearance of the strangers, the unusual baying of the hounds suggested the probability that they were actually passing the locale of the kennels, and were the influencing cause of the disturbance which had previously occurred in that quarter. A few minutes more of silence ensued, and then, to the amazement of the watchers, from the opposite end, at which they had disappeared, the ghostly patrol reemerged, and slowly and solemnly renewed their march along the terrace. As they neared the window, one of the terrified girls uttered a loud exclamation, when both faces were simultaneously raised, and the very ghastly appearance they presented so shocked one of the witnesses that she fell into a fit of hysterics, and remained at the window in the arms of her companion, shrieking violently. Her cries attracted some of the grooms, who occupied a floor below; and they, raising their windows to inquire into the cause of the alarm, had the still composed figures pointed out to them ere they receded, and again turned the angle of the walls.

Calling eagerly to each other from different windows, the two parties, now increased to twelve or fourteen persons, remained at the windows. Again, at the regular interval, succeeded the dismal wail of the dogs, the deep silence attributed to their passing the fourth side of the

castle; and again, in view of the *whole party*, the unmoved forms of the beruffed, bearded cavalier, and the high-heeled, vast-hooped dame, of a later age, stalked before their eyes. This time, however, all was confusion. The women filled the air with shrieks, and the men made a simultaneous rush to the apartments of the chatelaine of the castle, to obtain the keys and institute a search. This same chatelaine was the Countess Z., a lady of undaunted courage, firmness, and calm, resolute purpose. The instant she was apprised of an alarm, before she could even be informed of the details, she herself joined the searchers, and in her own person unlocked every well-secured gate which gave access to the castle terrace. Bolts and bars were each carefully examined and carefully withdrawn by the deliberate hand of the listening countess. She was soon joined by several of her sons, one of whom repeated to me the details of this narration. Search was made in every direction in vain. From without the walls all access was found to be utterly impossible. From within the only egress was entirely dependent on the keys, which invariably hung at the countess's bed's head. The keepers of the hounds, who lodged *without* the walls, had noticed, and in vain endeavored to quiet, the perturbation of their dogs, which they, too, remarked was aroused at regular intervals. At length, and just before the general alarm, they perceived two figures patroling the terrace, and were even then engaged in speculating upon the singularity of their appearance, and the remarkable effect their passing the kennels had upon the dogs.

It is only necessary to add, that in the presence of all the inmates of the castle, together with several magistrates and clergymen of the district, the affair was promptly and carefully investigated, and, notwithstanding the offer of

very large rewards, no light has ever yet been thrown on the subject.

For many weeks the family were scarcely able to procure the attendance of a single female servant, and neither wit nor wisdom, money nor power, has ever yet been able to explain the appearance, indubitably confirmed and widely verified by so many witnesses. It is needless to quote the opinions of the busy tattlers of the neighborhood. The family and inhabitants of the castle were long silent on the subject, in obedience to the stern mandate of the countess, their mother and mistress. In my own time I have again and again conversed with one of the members of this family — one who was present on the first alarm — a man of strong, sound sense, a magistrate, a "senator," and a determined opponent of every thing like "superstitious belief;" yet all his wisdom, strength, learning, and scepticism resolve themselves into the highly satisfactory conclusion "*that it is one of those things that never could be, and, in his opinion, never will be, accounted for.*"

HAUNTED HOUSES.—No. 2.

THE SANDFORD GHOST.

IN Europe, the existence of a house which bears an "evil report" (as the phrase goes) is of such common occurrence, that a large town or suburb without such an appendage is the exception, not the rule. We need not, of course, attempt to analyze the claims of such mansions to their horrific reputation, but making due allowance for the tendency of human nature to exaggerate, we have in all ages too many incontrovertible evidences of spiritual manifestations attaching to certain localities, to need proof or justify doubt that wood and stones can act as mediums for the manifestations of disembodied spirits. I do not mean now to defend or illustrate this position. I make it as an assertion, and proceed to quote one of the few cases in point, which has come under my own immediate cognizance, less to add my drop to the ocean of testimony than to form a basis for the remarks which are to follow.

It is now some thirty years ago since my mother (then a young unmarried girl) went to reside with her parents at the small collegiate town of Tiverton, in Devonshire, England. It was summer time, and, during her first evening in the place, she remarked with surprise the immense throng of carriages which woke up the echoes of the quiet, secluded square in which she resided, all passing one way, and seemingly crowding forth at one especial hour. Upon inquiry,

she learned that her host (a doctor, and the mayor of the town) was going to join the throng, and that the object of the assemblage (of whom the principal portion were *clergymen* of the Episcopal church) was to proceed to the village of Sandford, some four or five miles distant, there, in solemn and reverend conclave, to spend the night in a certain haunted house, for the purpose of "*laying the ghost.*" The "*trouble*" which attached itself to the house in question was of several years' standing, and consisted in the most unaccountable noise — the opening of doors, the pattering of footsteps, knockings, ringings of bells, and divers similar annoyances. The house had been occupied by various tenants, none of whom had found courage to endure these unwelcome accompaniments of their domestic privacy; finally, after the owner of the property had exhausted every resource in fruitless efforts to detect the origin of the disturbances, he had induced a family to occupy it rent free, in the hope of outliving the nuisance.

Thus it was at the time when my mother's family first made its acquaintance; the haunted house presented the appearance of a country store, or what is called in England a general shop. The noises, however, were so perpetual and incessant, that the villagers passing in open day could distinctly hear the poundings, as the papers of the day described them, going on "incessantly like the tap of a shoemaker's hammer." After nightfall, as may be imagined, the timid and superstitious inhabitants of the place dared not venture within the ghost-ridden precincts, while doctors, divines, lawyers, and politicians assembled nightly to hold colloquies with the invisible breakers of the public peace.

I am not so fortunate as to possess any published record at present of the doings and sayings of the "*Sandford*

ghost tribunal;" but I have read them in the papers of the day, and from the evidence of my own relatives the details are familiar to me. It seems that when the ghost-layers were assembled in midnight conclave, the order of the session was as follows: a large wooden table was placed in the centre of a certain room, which the ghost especially delighted to honor; round this table the gentlemen would seat themselves, and proceed to question the rapper in exactly the same manner as we use in our modern investigations.

For instance, several coins would be placed upon the table, and their number demanded, and distinctly given by the raps. The number of persons present, their ages, and (by the alphabet) a correct account of their several professions, were all points which could be rapped out with unfailing exactitude, and evidenced, even to these perplexed investigators, the presence of unseen *intelligence* of some kind. Through the medium of the raps, the sitters were informed that the agent was a *spirit*, a *female*, and one who had terminated a notoriously iniquitous career by a violent death some years since. These responses were invariable at every session, whoever was present, together with many other points of local interest to the inquirers. Now, it seems perfectly evident, that although the united wisdom of a neighborhood famous for its learning and piety, as is this nursery of students training for the church, could discover and pronounce, through the medium of the public press, that a mysterious and tremendous *imposture* existed somewhere, yet, *for three whole years*, (during which time the house perpetually changed inhabitants, and was subject to every possible scrutiny and search,) the origin of the said *imposture* was never brought to light. The mixture of wilful ignorance and conservatism which pre-

vailed in this inquiry one slight fact will evidence. A Mr. Colton, a clergyman of high reputation, and famous as the author of the celebrated Lacon, and many other works of science and genius, after having been most active in the investigations of this matter, gave it as his opinion that "the mystery *never* would be *satisfactorily cleared up*." What say the "big wigs" then? Why, even this: that the said Mr. Colton (being what the New Englanders call a remarkably smart man) *might* be a ventriloquist, and in all probability was the actual author of the whole affair. Thereupon ensued a paper war between the aspersed divine and the editor of the leading Tiverton journal, the whole ending in Mr. Colton's departure for a foreign country, and the continuance of the disturbance with renewed vigor. Again, as a *material* cause for the nuisance *must be found*, the magnates pitched upon a poor soldier of somewhat questionable reputation, who had returned from the war, and was, with his parents, one of the free tenants of the obnoxious mansion.

To test the truth of this idea, the suspected impostor was subjected to rigorous surveillance, and finally spirited away out of the village on board a foreign war ship. But all was in vain; neither the absence of the learned scholar, nor the ignorant soldier, could affect the indomitable perseverance of the Sandford invisible. Over and over were her fantastic freaks demonstrated, until the harassed inhabitants of the possessed dwelling declared their intention of finally resigning their free quarters to their unwelcome co-tenants. Then it was that the *materiality* of the persecution seemed to have reached its height. The family of the shopkeeper was a large one, and among them one little girl, of about ten years old, seemed to suffer the most from the malevolence of the ghost. She often complained with

annoyance, but no fear, of an ugly old woman, whom she could see in a corner of the room, making frightful grimaces at her. The parents declared before a magistrate that the child suffered much from this vision, and repeatedly called upon others to look at what seemed to her too palpable to be unseen by any one else. Now, when it one day happened that this very same child was found dead upon the hearthstone of the haunted room, the excitement which had floated like a flying gust around the neighborhood broke out into a perfect hurricane, and although a coroner's jury found a verdict that the child had come to its death from burning, — but whether by fire or lightning there was no evidence to show, — the awe-struck Sandfordites could not be persuaded that any other agent than the demoniac vision so often encountered and described by the little victim had thus finally accomplished her destruction. This calamity, however, determined the instant removal of the family, which, even after the child's death, was delayed by the following circumstance: The matron of the house was unexpectedly confined, and the doctor, at whose house my mother and family were staying, was called upon to attend her. It was of course necessary to procure a nurse, and Dr. G. complained bitterly that the superstition of the neighbors prevented the poorest of the females from entering the dreaded mansion in that capacity. Having at length succeeded in obtaining the necessary attendant from a long distance from the scene of terror, he concluded the accouchement would proceed in all due form. Not so, however: the new nurse seemed to be as especial a subject for the malevolence of the invisibles as the deceased child; for she, having been put to sleep for convenience in the haunted room itself, at once became the target of an incessant species of persecution. She was not permitted to rest day

or night; and as the climax to her torment, the doctor was summoned one morning to attend her, and found her confined to her bed from the effects of bruises, which covered her whole body with blue and black marks, and which she solemnly affirmed, in the presence of a magistrate, she had received during the night from an invisible hand, which she felt, but could not see, violently belaboring her with what seemed to her to feel like "*a stone.*" When at length her cries for help aroused the other inmates of the house, the hand was withdrawn, and she and her terrified assistants distinctly heard a bumping sound, as of a large stone moving by its own volition across the room and out at the door. Now, my authority for this incident, the worthy and venerable doctor himself, bore testimony to the pitiable condition and bruised limbs and body of this woman, adding, "It is a dreadful but actual fact, that she whom I sent to that house, one week ago, a hale, hearty, and very stout countrywoman, is now a miserably emaciated-looking object, worn away to a very shadow; and it would be positive murder to keep her there one hour longer." The next incident which attaches to a residence in this terrible abode took place at the sale of the furniture, which ensued the very first hour that the mother of the family became convalescent. The auctioneer, who was intimately acquainted with my grandfather and mother, related to them, that as he was making an inventory of the goods in the dreaded room itself, (but in broad daylight, be it remembered,) an old lady entered the room, and, without noticing him, proceeded to open and systematically rummage a wardrobe which stood near him. The auctioneer, deeming it to be one of the elder members of the family, made no remark for some time; at length he was summoned to partake of the family dinner, and left the room and the old lady still

busy at her occupation. Concluding, however, that she was about to follow, he entered the dining room, took his own seat, and courteously placed another for his late companion.

On being questioned why he did so, he replied, it was for the old lady in the next room, who was coming to dinner; but he soon found that the family was all assembled, and that they had no knowledge of any such person as he described, except as identifying her with the visions which had so tormented the poor deceased child.

After this, the house remained tenantless for many months, yet still the visitations continued. At a considerable distance from the place the rappings could be heard both night and day; lights were often seen flashing through the deserted rooms at night, and, it was added, *figures* also. On one occasion, the workmen who were employed by the owner of the property to rip up the boards and examine the walls, were occupied in the haunted chamber, when a missile, of some kind not discovered, was thrown within an inch of one of their heads, passing from the outer window through the chamber, and out at another window, with such extreme nicety, that the height and breadth of the holes in the two windows were found to correspond to a hair's breadth; they were, moreover, as round as a bullet, and, until the house fell into entire decay, and the whole of the windows were broken, the one window with its mathematically formed hole was viewed with equal awe and curiosity by admiring passengers. At length it was found impossible to procure men who would work in the house at all. The invisible hammers were drumming around them, unaccountable voices shouting in their ears; and dangerous missiles being perpetually projected from unseen hands, made their labors

not only most repugnant, but actually dangerous. In fine, although the papers blazed, the magistrates legislated, the owner tendered unheard-of rewards, divines prayed, and whole parties of martial heroes sat up during the livelong night, until they were fairly scared out by the sight of their own swords drawn and brandished above their heads, as they testified on oath, by an invisible agent, the mystery remained unsolved. The house fell into decay, abhorrence, and oblivion; and unless the manifestations of modern spiritualism can throw a light on the subject, I cannot pretend otherwise to explain away any of the mysteries of which I have become the mere narrator from sources whose veracity is as unquestionable as truth itself.

What I would infer from this Sandford ghost affair is simply this: First, that it corresponds in every particular with the manifestations of the last ten years in this country; and secondly, that in this, as in all other instances which have sufficient warranty to claim our attention, the instances where wood and stone are proved to be mediums for the manifestations of spirits are almost invariably those where the life principle has been recklessly wasted. I speak not now of such demonstrations as were exhibited in the case of Dr. Phelps's family. The presence of one or two strong physical force mediums was there clearly evidenced; nor were the manifestations confined, as in the case of "haunted houses," to one locality, but, I repeat, where the latter is the case, we never fail to find a violent death associated with the traditionary character of the house.

Nor need we in this confound the effect of a superstitious remembrance of such a fact with the philosophical cause which *may* exist for such manifestations — causes which mv spirit friends explain to me as follows: Every

thing that has life has medium power. The vegetable, mineral, insect, and animal kingdom are each and all, in their several capacities, sympathetic agents or conductors of that electric power which is to all creation what soul is to body, and spirit to soul. Neither does wood, stone, mineral or vegetable substance, lose its electric power by the act which severs it from the parent rock, tree, or stem. The diamond grows in the mine, but not in the ring; the tree expands in its native soil, but contracts and decays in the floor, bench, or table. The life principle is severed with its own severance from the root or rock which gave it birth; but even in decay the vital principle of creation, electricity, still lingers, and while there, attracts in a greater or less degree such objects as come within the sphere of its magnetism. In our still very imperfect knowledge of the wonderful agencies of electricity and magnetism, we are unable to determine correctly how far inanimate substances may act as conductors, or what vast magnetic results may yet be discovered from combinations hitherto undreamed of. The scientific world is yet in its infancy; and as our interior sight begins to open, and the belief in spirit materiality and connection with the grosser elements of nature begins to dawn upon us, we learn to place magnetism at the helm and electricity at the tiller when we venture forth into the broad ocean of philosophical discovery to which the science of spirit communion seems to point the way, and no longer smile with sovereign contempt at the mysteries of "crystals and divining cups," or treat as altogether ridiculous the idea that prevailed among the orders of ancient priesthoods, namely, that the scientific combinations of metallic substances and precious stones were consequential in creating that sphere by which they professed to hold communion with the

world of spirits. Be this as it may, the developments of the present century alone are sufficient evidence that an invisible intelligence — one whose main characteristic is its identity with the departed of earth — is now among us, *does* hold communion with humanity, and does hold that communion through the medium of some quality, as prevalent in some organizations as it is essentially lacking in others.

The favorite theory of *religious* spiritualists, or those in whom the ideal rather than the philosophical prevails, is, that this medium power depends mainly on the quality and character of the *mind;* but every day experience proves this view of the case to be fallacious. The pure naturally affinitize with the pure — that is an axiom none can deny; hence we do not look for the degrading communications of vice and infamy through the lips of a pure medium.

In another place I shall show that, though such an anomaly may occur, it is almost impossible that it should be of frequent occurrence; yet do we find, upon incontrovertible evidence, the fact that spirit manifestations are more or less regulated by organism, health, weather, magnetic influences, and many other causes of a purely external nature. Thus is it, then, say my spirit friends, that the magnetism of a certain spirit, being still correspondential with his magnetism while in the form, seeks out and can communicate with infinitely more facility through a medium whose magnetism forms a satisfactory battery, whereby the electric telegraph of mind may be worked. We are all familiar with instances in which a spirit in strong affinity with some beloved earth-friend has yet been unable to find one among many mediums of *opposite* developments whom he could control sufficiently to convey one message, even although he might satisfactorily express

another. In the matter of haunted houses, however, the spirits inform me that the emanations which proceed from themselves, when they, in perishing violently, are in a still earthly or humanitary condition, are so gross and imbued still so entirely with the earth's affinities that they cling to the place of their departure, and attaching to the wood or stone where they first emanate from the broken casket of humanity, form a medium of itself, whereby, on subsequent occasions, they can return and manifest their presence without any additional human mediatorial exhalation. When, in addition to this provision, derived in fact from the wasted oil of their own life principle, the spirits of the murdered dead have engraved on their souls the form of an evil life, and their earthly affinities in consequence are of an unusually gross and earthly tendency, their love for such manifestations may be understood; and although we have nothing in modern spiritualism to justify the vulgar superstition that the spirits of evil doers, especially when they have endured a violent death, *are doomed* to return to the scene of their last agony in retributive unrest, we can still comprehend why gross natures delight in such gross manifestations — why their evil propensities attract them back to a sphere far more in affinity with evil than the progressive life of the spheres; and by accepting and following out my very imperfect attempt to show wherein a house or locality may be made a medium for spirit manifestations, even through the emanations of a death in the midst of life, I think philosophers will find no difficulty in accounting for the singular phenomena presented by what is called haunted houses.

CHRISTMAS STORIES.—No. 1.

THE STRANGER GUEST.

AN INCIDENT FOUNDED ON FACT.*

IN no nation is the pride of intellect and philosophical intelligence more remarkably developed than in Germany.

Individually and nationally, the Germans exhibit the strange anomaly of the most vivid ideality and the most stolid "rationalism." The essence of their literature is spiritualistic, the philosophy of their religion almost barbaric in its materialism. The modern German is a living illustration of overweening intellectual intelligence, developed to a high pitch, and resulting in so much self-reliance and self-appreciation, that, in the contemplation of his own attainments, the creature identifies himself with the Creator, and at length originates the arrogant phantasm that his wonderful organization, scientific developments, and keen perceptive faculties are the result of some "law of being," some self-creative principle, and not the faint reflection of a lustre derived from the source of all light and intelligence — the Deity himself.

There are others who acknowledge a supernal source for the bright emanations of mind which every where illumi-

* Written for "*The Christian Spiritualist*," in 1856.

nate the world; but these, with the national obliquity of vision which will not recognize the Architect in his works, deify the sun, moon, and stars, the grass of the field, and the atoms of the air; and, while calling God nature, reduce themselves (the crowning glory of creation) to a dependence for life and being on the lowest and most inferior of God's works — inanimate being.

I do not desire to enter into a disquisition on the characteristics of Germany, the most interesting of literary nations; and I only thus allude to the discrepancies between their intelligence and its use, to point more forcibly the singular fact that in no country upon the earth are the inanimate germs of spiritualism more rife than in Germany — the land of the weird huntsman and the gnome, the visionary undine and the beneficent sylph; the land of legend and music, both the children of one birth, and that birth the spirit within, which ever whispers to man that the soul lives after death, and after death returns to earth and communicates. It is this interior conviction, this involuntary recognition of the second stage of man's existence, which has in all ages been stigmatized as superstition. We shall not now discuss its nature, but its origin we trace as coeval with the earliest records; while the prevalence of superstition, or those ideal imaginings which are perpetually interweaving the supernatural with the natural in German tradition, writings, and life, flourish in exactly inverse ratio to that universal recognition of Deity which we call religion. Flourish, however, it does; and in consideration of the invariable law of cause and effect, we are led to designate the Germans as among the most receptive of nations to spiritual inspirations; nay, more, we can trace it in their wildest legends as well as in their anomalous lives and opinions — the ever-active presence of

an outside intelligence, warring against the philosophies of schoolmen and the dogmatism of colleges.

It was during one of the many arguments upon the ideality and superstition opposed to the stolidity and scepticism of the German character, which I was once in the habit of holding with my German teacher, that he communicated to me the substance of any little legends within the scope of his own experience, alike illustrative of my estimate of their character, and the existence of undefined spiritualism among them.

One day this esteemed friend opened our usual discussion in the following manner: —

"I have just received a letter from blind Albert, announcing to me his speedy dissolution. Let me see," — referring to the letter, — "the 16th of February — even so. This very day, then, closes his long-protracted and useful career. What a pity so fine an organization should resolve itself into the atoms which make up this dusty, crumbling earth, while the busy, active spirit will be absorbed in mere immaterial atmosphere!"

"I will not now combat your miserable theory of annihilation," I replied; "but pray inform me who is the blind Albert, who writes to you without eyesight? and how does he know that he is to die to-day?"

"You smile, my friend; Albert will not die by the *rope* or the *axe*. His peculiar organization is identical with what your Scotchman calls 'second sight;' he is an unerring seer, or prophet; and I call him *blind Albert*, as his ordinary sobriquet, derived from a very singular passage in his early life. Shall I tell it you?"

"By all means; your German incidents are generally singular; they are so weird and supernatural, coming, too, from such matter-of-fact subjects."

"Nay, then, you must gratify your curiosity at the expense of your patience, and e'en make a translation of blind Albert's legend. I will bring it for your next lesson."

Reader, I give you that translation, imperfectly rendered, indeed, but with more fidelity to the text than respect for the English grammar. Its peculiar feature may bear evidence to the fact that German legendary lore is not *all* fictitious; and spiritualism, with its mysterious presence, is ever ready to respond to the unaccountable in the present as in the past generations of man's history.

LEGEND OF THE STRANGER GUEST.

WHAT a beautiful season is Christmas in a remote German town! It matters not that the bitter, bitter north opens his icy storehouse, and locks up every object in his relentless chains. It matters not that the freezing wind cuts into the shivering frame, fettering the mighty universe in his frozen bands, and stagnating with his numbing influence every thing in life and nature, until the frost king reigns supreme over all, except the warm, palpitating human heart, which ever seems to respond to the voice of the chilling tyrant with such a hearty, joyous halloo, that it fairly drives the shivering old king off to the mountain's top, or to float on the heavy wave, and makes his reign seem the merriest, drollest, laugh-provoking period of the whole year round.

Only look how the jolly old burghers, tricked out in their Siberian mufflers, waddle along the crowded streets, shaking their canes at laughing little urchins, privileged, by the joyous season, to hold up their tiny paper

lanterns, and soliciting contributions for their Christmas candles.

The little mobocracy don't seem much frightened, either, at the severe warning against impudence and beggars which accompanies the gift of the ever ready pence; and the dignitaries, so stern all the year round, wink cunningly to each other on Christmas day, and pass on, bestowing more lectures and more pence on equally audacious delinquents.

"Good day," "A merry Christmas to you," "Bitterly cold to-day," "Jolly time though," "Glorious season," "God bless you," "Love to all at home," — these are the bywords at every street corner, and laugh, laugh, — how they laugh, these jolly, hospitable Germans, at Christmas time! Peep in at the open door, too, unless the fierce blast slams it in your face, and sends you into the arms of an apologetic, wind-drifted Mein Herr, like yourself, — and here you will see Christmas preparations that will make your very heart leap again. Such red, red charcoal fires! such a glorious steam exuding from vast caldrons above them! while all around bright berries, cheerful evergreens, and fancifully emblazoned little inscriptions bespeak the approaching eventide, when the sweet reunion of kindred hearts meet to celebrate a season of whose real meaning the Germans have so warm an appreciation in a *poetical* sense, but so little in a *religious* or *actual* sense.

But indeed we must on, following hard and fast in the footsteps of two figures careering along the path which leads to the ferry. Mark them, and you will recognize the very impersonations of Christmas, with all its exterior exigency, and its interior jocundity of spirit. They are two young men in the very pride of adolescence, and though their dress displays more of the jantiness of youth than

the requirements of the season warrant, yet they are well protected against its inclemency, for the warm, gushing springs of human love and kindness are illuminating their handsome features, beaming in their intelligent eyes, thickening the very nap on their somewhat worn overcoats, and laughing out in pure glee in every hearty greeting they exchange with responsive passengers.

They are brothers evidently, and evidently closely allied, in spirit at least, to a certain huge, shaggy, rollicking four-footed companion, who, careering around them, dashing into every imaginable place where a huge dog ought not to go, is being perpetually whistled back and remonstrated with, as perpetually to renew his misdemeanors, and as perpetually to excite the laughter or the reprimand, the sly cheer or approving caress, of his two young masters. And now they reach the aim of their Christmas walk — rather a strange one, too, for it is a lone ferry house, so desolate and so remote that even in summer the rushes by the river bank whistle a mournful requiem to the sun, which seems to have died a natural death in his attempt to illuminate the dark pine wood in the rear; and now in winter the frost king has it all his own way.

Yes, indeed, it is *very*, *very* cold; for even the two joyous young pedestrians, with the very warm hearts and the threadbare overcoats, shiver, and express a hope that Eugene, dear Eugene, will *soon* arrive; and then, to negative the selfishness of this wish, they all at once set themselves to thinking what a cold, dreary voyage *he* will have up the half-frozen river — dangerous, too, it may prove among the masses of ice which render the navigation so uncertain and perilous; and then they became very grave and very anxious, and the great wolf dog, "Faust," sympathizing in their feelings by the inevitable links of intuition, follows

them into the ferry house with a solemn gait and speculative droop of the ears; and as they talk rapidly over the difficulties and dangers which their dear friend (whom they have come to meet) may encounter, Faust crouches down in a subdued frame of mind, and blinks his eyes reproachfully at the broad expanse of the half-frozen river. Eugene, the anxiously-expected friend, was, it seems, the betrothed of Estelle, the almost idolized sister of the two young men now lodged at the ferry house. They had been long betrothed, but too poor to marry until Eugene had become the inheritor of a little fortune from a distant relative.

He had gone to a distant town to transact the business attending his increase of wealth, was now returning, and, please God, (as the brothers, in strict confidence, told the ferryman and every one else within their hearing,) this same Christmas day was to make Eugene and Estelle man and wife. The marriage ceremony was to take place in the evening at the house of Estelle's parents, with a whole township assembled to witness their joy; and yet — and yet — the anxiously-expected bridegroom had not arrived. "'Twas very distressing." The ferryman thought not — 'twas only natural at this season of the year.

At least it was an anxious moment for them. The hard-hearted ferryman denied it. "If nothing happened to the vessel it would come safe; vessels always did when they were not wrecked, or foundered, or burnt."

Still the anxious brothers persisted it was strange; why, how late it was; the diligence had made two circuits, and was again starting on its third tour; and every body knew how sluggish that old diligence was.

The ferryman puffed at his long pipe. The last proposition was unanswerable; then he slowly removed its stem

from his lips, and, pointing with an ineffable look of superiority to the river, first directed his companions' attention to the masses of floating ice, and then to the distant view of a laboring boat being gradually towed towards them — nearer and nearer it comes, until it actually approaches within range of the open jaws of Faust, who was barking a vociferous welcome to the long and anxiously-expected Eugene.

"A merry Christmas to you — a jolly wedding, dearest Estelle. The darling old folks, and the precious little ones, how are they all? Poor old Faust too! Good doggie! the first to see me; and now, the baggage — hold, hold! don't touch that case, officer, for the universe! The first peep there must be for my pretty Estelle herself."

Here follows a general laugh and — "Ah, sly dog, a wedding present, eh! and now into the house with ye, trunks and all; we must wait for that crawling old caterpillar of a diligence, and what, O ferryman! here's good cheer indeed! Schnapps and beer hot, and sparkling wine, where a moment before had been only an old empty deal table."

"All right, sir," quoth the grim ferryman, wonderfully relaxed in mirth and jollity; "we'll drink to the bride and bridegroom, and then, hey for the wedding! Here's to ye, mein herr, and to you too, mein charming Fraulein."

"Why, who on earth is that absurd old ferryman bowing and scraping to? — a strange lady? Who is it, Hermann? Did she not come with you, Eugene?" asked the elder brother. "Not at all, my brother; but perhaps the lady is waiting for some one from on board. Alas! I was the only passenger, and she will be disappointed." Then, doffing his fur cap, the young man respectfully inquired if the silent stranger was waiting for any one — should he inquire, or could he assist her, &c.

The lady half rose, smiled, thanked him, and replied she was not waiting for any one. How strange! thought the young men, exchanging glances. The brothers, too, fancied they had not remarked her presence there before.

Her words, though few and simple, were given in a tone of such peculiar and thrilling sweetness, that the young men, chained to the spot, stood, hat in hand, waiting for an opportunity to say more.

The stranger saw their design, and humored it. "I have been present," she said, "listening to your anxious speculations on your friend's arrival; permit me to atone for the involuntary confidence, by congratulating him on his safety."

"How much I thank you, sweet lady!" replied Eugene, responding to the deep interest in the *tone* rather than the *words* of the stranger; and then, whilst waiting for the weary diligence to remove their baggage, they all sat round the stove, the fair stranger of course in the warmest corner, and still they talked of Estelle, and the dear, happy day it was to be to them all; and the tears that stood in the eyes of the young men, as they spoke of their bright sister, were reflected in the glistening and beautiful eyes of the stranger.

Then they agreed that it was a very good thing Christmas did come once a year, bringing in its happy celebration long-estranged friends, scattered families, and sometimes long-estranged hearts, into the cordial bonds of renewed peace and love.

They told their smiling and sympathizing listener that they were a large, very happy, but rather poor family; that their father and mother were old, but such kind people! And at last, as the crazy diligence did not yet appear, and Eugene's marriage furniture must await its

arrival, they began timidly to ask first their own hearts, and then the stranger herself, why she sat alone, on Christmas day, in such a cold, lone, dreary place. "You do not find it cold or dreary," she replied.

"True, lady; but we had a purpose in coming here, and that purpose warms our hearts and our limbs alike. Man is gregarious, you know, and on Christmas day home is the only sphere for humanity, unless it goes forth to gather dear friends together, still more to embellish that home."

"And to those who have neither friends nor home, how then?" replied the lady.

"Ah, madam, can there be such unhappy ones? I hope not."

"Do I seem so very unhappy, then, my new friend?"

Thus interrogated, the young men gazed fixedly at the beautiful speaker. Yet she was not beautiful either; tall and graceful in form, with a cheek of rosy hue, and an eye of heavenly blue, she was otherwise plain, even ordinary in appearance; but the fascination of her voice, look, and manner, it was impossible to describe. You felt subdued in her presence, purer, happier, and better, because she was there; and as the young men gazed in mournful sympathy on one who seemed to imply that she had neither home nor friends, at a period when their own hearts were overflowing with the blessed consciousness of both, she smiled at them so joyously, so hopefully, that they smiled too in spite of themselves, and only murmured that it was passing strange.

"Yet I feel lonely to-day," she added; and the word *lonely* struck on their kind hearts like a dart of steel.

"You come from foreign lands, lady?"

"I do," she replied, glancing at her foreign costume.

"Know no one, perhaps?"

"Yes, you."

"Dear lady, then it is with us you must come and spend your Christmas day — you *must* not be alone."

"Nay, I am about to return to my inn. I have, as you say, no friends here, no amusements; so I came to the ferry house to enjoy life in the life of others, and derive happiness from the sight of it in those dear friends whom I felt sure would be for meeting in this spot."

Now, the young men never thought of inquiring how she knew that friends were to meet in that place just then; but their warm hearts were full, nor would they hear of her going to an inn, a cold, money-making, selfish inn, on a Christmas day — nay, she must spend it at *home*, and that home was the four walls which contained the only friends she seemed to have.

"But your father and mother," urged the lady, as the groaning diligence slowly hove in sight.

"Madam," said the elder brother, "father is the best of men, good and kind to all he knows, still more so to strangers, whom he believes God sends to him for the especial exercise of his hospitality. Our dear mother may be a little askew in her temper now and then; but then her temper has a strong enemy to contend with in her kind heart, which somehow always manages to get the best of the day. But above all, madam, we have an old grandam, one who teaches us all, and, in truth, rules us all; and well it is for us she does, for her rule is so good, that we feel to strive against it would be to make war on Heaven; and this good one has often told us to entreat strangers to share our hospitality, for in so doing, she says, we may 'entertain angels unaware.'"

Half an hour from this time Estelle was sobbing on the

shoulder of her betrothed, and an ancient dame, with snowy coif and venerable face, paled with the storms of a rough pilgrimage, but beaming with the shadows of a brighter life to come, pressed the cold hand of the strange lady, and bade her kindly welcome to the Christmas festivities of her son's house, and her grandchild's wedding.

No one asked the stranger guest her name; but she sat in their midst like the bright, calm moon illuminating the blue vault of the midnight sky, and an unknown, silent joy pervaded that happy circle, such as they had never known in their life's experience before.

Chapter II.

Coldly gleaming aslant the bright scarlet berries, and gilding the icy prison houses of the frost-bound trees, the winter sun strove to mark his sense of the importance of Estelle's wedding day by shining his very best and brightest; yet it was but a wintry effort after all, for there was no warmth in his beams. That mattered not, however, for the sunshine of the heart reigned so triumphantly within, that a genial summer glow seemed to pervade the very slide before the door, and dance in quivering light across its frozen threshold.

In a remote, mysterious bower, the bride and her fluttering assistants were engrossed in the mysteries of the toilet. Lending a charm to every snow-white garment she touched, the stranger guest attired the trembling Estelle with her own fair and tasteful hands.

"O, how beautiful!" cried the delighted group around her, as she stood arrayed, a bride fit for the angels. The

stranger smiled, and asked for *the pearls* which were to complete her costume.

"O, yes, the pearls! the pearls!" cried the laughing group of bridemaids.

"The pearls!" ejaculated Estelle. "Ah, the traitor! Eugene, then, has told you about my pearls."

The merry girls all laughed, and one said, —

"Why, Estelle, those pearls are already celebrated."

"Come, produce them at once, little mystery, and tell your sweet bridemaid all about them," cried another; "how, for a long period, they were loaned to redeem your dear old orchard; and when you all gave them up for lost, how Eugene became rich, and redeemed them unknown, for a time, to any of you; and, finding they required new setting, how he took them to Hans Mark, the jeweller, and, under a strict promise of secrecy, left them to be reset; how the said Hans told every body (also in strict secrecy) all the story, and what a surprise they were to be for Estelle on her wedding day."

"And how, at last, they came to be no surprise at all," broke in the bride somewhat ruefully, to find the history of her treasure so widely circulated through the unlucky Hans' garrulity.

"O, but if you have no surprise, Estelle, you have the lovely pearls, you know," rejoined her merry gossip; "and now — only see! if the strange lady has not found them for you herself."

The girls wondered, and the bride gazed doubtingly; but there, indeed, stood the stranger with the open case in a hand whose whiteness rivalled the pearls themselves.

"Shall I deck you with them, sweet one?" she asked.

"Do so, my friend; your hands are so soft that I feel, when you adorn me, as if I were putting on the robes of purity."

"You are assuming a very holy garb, dear girl," replied the lady; "your marriage dress is the emblem of woman's truest and best mission — that of a wife and mother. See, I enclasp you with this snowy bracelet; may it foreshadow the strong tie that is destined to uphold your own weak arm through life. Now the fair chain hangs around your neck. O, my little captive, you will not shrink from the fetters, as gentle and not less pure, you will assume to-day; for they will be those of a kind ruler, a tender companion — not a master; and this ornament is the spotless symbol of your innocent captivity. See, maidens, how gracefully this pearl chain becomes the young wife! But stay — where is the *cross* that should depend from this centre pearl?"

"I know not how you became aware that there was a cross missing, lady," replied Estelle; "still you are right; there was one once, but it is in holier keeping than mine; it reposes on the bosom of *the dead;* it was hung around the neck of my great grandmother, for whose bridal the pearls were ordered, and by whose desire the cross was suffered to remain where it had hung since her marriage."

"Now, to my mind," cried one of the chatterers, "that was purely selfish. What good could a beautiful pearl cross do to a poor, decaying, old great-grandmother's bones, when there is such a beautiful living bride quite pining for it."

"Hush, hush, Clementine!" gently interposed Estelle; "could I hope to be half as good in my marriage life as report pronounces my admirable ancestress to have been, I too should be worthy of being decked out for the tomb in a fair white cross; and so my marriage trousseau can well spare it to the holy and blessed dead."

The legend does not say what part the stranger guest

took in this discussion; but it proceeds to show that the bride was finally attired by *her* hands, and that all the world of that little old German town declared that so fair and gracious a bride had never been seen there since the days of the great-grandmother before referred to, whose name, it seems, was reverenced as a monument of goodness and worth in that remote district. Furthermore, it is remembered in the family how on that day the usually tractable little brothers and sisters of Estelle became suddenly restive, — the very little ones, at least, — and made a bold stand, declaring their independence, and refusing to be washed, dressed, and made fine by any other hands than those of the fair stranger, who petted, caressed, and decked their heads with garlands of Christmas berries and evergreens, until the little ones looked like so many wood sprites, all the while hanging round their new friend in much wonder and delight as she told them stories of strange lands and sung them songs of marvellous sweetness.

As the day wore on, and the bright glow of the ruddy pine fire glimmered on the darkening walls of the common room, the family drew around the blazing logs; and while the marriage guests were assembling in a still more stately apartment fitted up for the occasion, an interval of sweet repose came upon them, such as stamps its memory and individuality upon a lifetime.

The mother of this "very large, very happy, but poor family," had, as her eldest son had predicted, looked somewhat "askew" when they entered the house bringing with them a *strange lady*. Had it been a *strange gentleman*, the aforesaid mother would have counted her silver spoons, cast a wary eye on her tankards and mantel ornaments, and decided to give the poor wanderer a

Christmas feast and welcome, even at the risk of his being a returned convict; "but a lady, indeed! picked up with at a lone ferry house — 'twas so strange!"

She could not say that she was so very young, or so very handsome; but there was a something about her — a something which even the hesitating matron herself declared was irresistible. "She was evidently a keen observer of human nature, too," for she had whispered in the mother's ear such truthful, kind words about her generous-hearted boys; and, wonderful to relate, told each one's disposition to the life, especially Ernest's gentleness and love of music, and Hermann's impetuosity and ardor in the chase.

Then the little children had become so very fond of her; and though evidently quite a lady, she wasn't above giving her some valuable hints about the baking of her Christmas cakes; and she actually found her plaiting up her old mother's cap, which she had not had time to do herself, with so becoming a turn, that the coarse lawn looked like a quite new silver crown coming from the artistic fingers of a perfect fairy. At length, as the evening shadows deepened, the good Frau relaxed her watchful, suspicious gaze of her eldest boy, Hermann, and the stranger; and while the latter sat between her old mother and her husband, with one little one nestling in her bosom and two tiny forms crouching fondly round her knees, the fountain of her eyes, long choked up with the hard, cold realities of a struggling life, welled up anew with all the tenderness of susceptible youth, and she fairly wept, while the stranger chanted beautiful but unfamiliar airs, telling of heaven, and love, and unknown lands, and scenes brighter and holier than the heart of man had ever dreamed of before.

The last purple tinge of sunlight had left the ice-clad mountains in the cold, gray obscurity of a wintry night; the last shout of revelry had died in the frozen streets; the bonfires were muttering into ashes; the silence of night pervaded the darkened town, save when the Christmas song, borne on the howling blast, swept by, dim and faint from the curtain-muffled windows of the rich or the chinks of crazy old cottage doors, the equally joyous dwelling of the poor.

Estelle and Eugene were married. He looked into her face and murmured, "She is *Estelle* no longer; she is now *myself*."

She gazed tenderly into his eyes, and wondered how it was that she had lost her own identity, and was with him *one* or *nothing*.

Many of the wedding guests had come from far to be present at the ceremony, and now they had departed; only those remained who were to partake of the hospitality of the house for the night — a matter now become one of exigency, for the elements were troubled and a fierce storm was raging without, threatening destruction to all who attempted to brave its fury. For these guests the younger members of the family were busily engaged contriving, as they best could, sleeping accommodations for the night; and still the rest of the party sat around the blazing pine logs, listening as before to the melody of the sweet songstress, who sat in their midst like a descended Saint Cecilia.

At length the words "a parting song" and "good night" were echoed round the room, and the parting song was given: and yet, amid the chorused "good night" the magic voice of the stranger rose in tones whose sweetness, power, and poetry vibrated from the ear to the heart,

and became stamped there in a memory which no time could ever after efface.

And now the parting blessings are exchanged, and the low-roofed parlor, with its cross-beams, old fashioned furniture, and inviting little couch of bright flowered chintz, is left to the silence of night and the presence of the unknown lady, who prefers, she says, to repose there rather than further to intrude on her kind and hospitable entertainers.

The storm had cleared off, and as the last of the party had drawn aside the window curtain to gaze forth on the scene without, the cold stars poured their gem-like radiance down into the silent garden. There it lay, with a thin shadow thrown across the lattice-work of the casement — it is the bending form of the graceful stranger, in her peculiar dress of pale gray floating around her, as she, departing, waves an affectionate farewell to her host and hostess. Grotesque shadows, formed by the flickering lamps they carry, wave on the dark walls; the feathery forms of the ice-bound trees gleam fantastic and ghost-like through the uncurtained lattice; above all, shine the far-off, lone, bright watchers of the midnight sky; and these were the last tokens which any in that house ever beheld of their unknown guest.

Deep in the winter night, which in these northern climes usurps a lengthened sway over the hours of morning, a long, loud, piercing shriek woke the echoes of the quiet mansion, and scared the slumbering inhabitants from their deep repose. Again — again — and once again — and then a silence as terrific as those sounds, so replete with human fear or agony. Up they spring, and forward rush the terror-stricken group to the room which had been tenanted by the nameless visitor. The uncurtained lattice

swinging open in the breeze revealed the winter scene without, and a still wilder scene within — chairs and tables overturned, the couch tenantless, and the form of a man was discovered lying on the ground near the open window, and apparently writhing in extreme agony. No other person was visible; but by the side of the moaning figure lay a long, unsheathed knife, some workman's tools, and a pair of pistols. At first, surprise rendered the whole party mute and motionless; but as they attempted to raise the intruder from the ground, he renewed the dismal cries which had aroused them with such a lamentable accent of woe, that they again retreated in terror and dismay. At length the father of Estelle, assuming the firmness of his station and character, raised up the sufferer, and demanded the cause of his terrible cries and presence there. His only response was at first choking sobs and broken utterance; but after much time consumed in assurances that he was in no danger, but rather amongst sympathizing assistants, the miserable wretch confessed that he was one of a gang of house-breakers, who, allured by the report that the bridegroom had that day brought into the house gems of immense value, had determined to take advantage of the confusion of a bridal assemblage to rob and perhaps murder the slumbering household. He added that he possessed some knowledge of the house, and his companions had therefore insisted on his entering the easily opened window first, and then — and then —

"Well, what then?" cried the eager listeners.

"And then — but, O God, what horror! what pain is in my burning eyes! Will no one help me? O, if ye be Christian men and women, restore, O restore the sight to my burning eyes! or give me aught to ease this pain!"

"O, how terrible this is!" cried the affrighted women. "See, he is blind."

"Unhappy man! how could you plot to commit such a crime — you who bear about with you already the judgment of God?"

"Will you not help me, then?" moaned the wretched man. "Men and women, as surely as ye now stand in the presence of your Creator, *I entered this window in the full possession of my eyesight;* but even as my foot touched the ground, a woman's form stood before me. Her arm was extended towards me in a menacing attitude. I sought to strike her, but even with the act, she laid her hand on my eyes. At first the touch was soft, and cold as the grave; but in a moment a darkness seemed to envelop my brain, and then fire, fierce, living fire, burnt into my eyes, ate into the sockets, and seemed like a flash of lightning to consume their power of sight forever. I shrieked aloud in my pain and terror, and still I sought to grapple with my unseen foe. I struck and wrestled with the air, I clutched at space, but saw, heard, felt no more — only fire, fire! eyes of flame within, and darkness, all darkness without! For one moment I heard the retreating footsteps of my companions, scared, doubtless, by my involuntary cries; and then was I alone? I know not; but O, if ye be men, pity, forgive, and help me in my pain, my remorse, and my blindness!"

The housebreakers' tools and pistols scattered around evidenced some of the truths of this terrible legend. Footsteps of men passing to and fro were traced in the newly-fallen snow, and subsequent inquiry proved the fact that the criminal's vision had only *that night, and at that time,* been taken from him. Terror and confusion reigned throughout the house and the entire neighborhood. With the morning's light, however, came calmness and action. The truth of the man's story was investigated and proved.

Only one mystery remained, and that was the sudden and inexplicable disappearance of the stranger guest. Some there were who identified her mysterious presence with the form who had been instrumental in blind Albert's terrible punishment. Others doubted, wondered, speculated, shook their heads solemnly, and said nothing. Still the dark spot in the night's history was her unaccountable absence, and for many hours the distracted family of her sorrowful hostess searched for traces of her in vain. *Her* footprint was not on the snow; no token of her presence remained in the lone room where they had left her; and the vision of the gray-clad form which the blind man declared had preceded his fearful deprivation of sight, was the only assurance left to her bewildered friends that she had been among them at all. Could he describe her face? He saw it not. He remembered nothing but the gray form, and the cold hand changing into a grasp of molten fire, and searing his eyeballs forever — forever!

Darkness to all eternity! O, miserable fate! Total eclipse! No sun, no moon, no stars! O, to see once more the color of the rose, the sky, the earth, the green face of nature! to gaze into sympathizing human eyes! to grope his way out of the thick darkness that enveloped him!

But once more to catch but a thread of light streaming on his darkened orbs — to *look* up to the sky and catch but one ray of sunlight to guide his stumbling way — only that — and he would devote his whole life ever after to God — that God who gave light, and eyes, blessed eyes, to *see* it. But O, if sin, the night of the soul, can pass away, may not blindness, the night of the body, do so also? Cheer up, poor penitent! the night of body and soul are both passing away. The physical and mental

day is dawning, and light, beautiful, glorious sunlight, shall dawn on thy heart and on thy seared eyeballs. Long months of suffering and repentance had subdued that ruffian heart into the submission of a humbled child; and then there came a wise physician, who declared himself able, by God's providence, to cure a blindness which he pronounced to be a very singular but still curable nervous affection.

The prediction was accompanied by earnest admonitions to the patient to aid his work by prayer and supplication; and, O, joy unutterable! the dawn appears, the perfected morning of mind and body unfolds, and blind Albert became a good and exemplary man, and, restored to sight once more, worshipped God in the broad beams of the glorious sunlight.

He ever after earned a humble but sufficient subsistence as a day laborer — often working in the garden of the kind and gentle Estelle, revelling in the glory of the many-colored blossoms which it was his choicest pride to rear for her gratification. Of a Sunday, under the guidance of some strangely inspiring power, the unlettered man would pour forth floods of eloquence to many a sinful, erring creature like himself, until he became famed as a very apostle of good works and inspired teaching.

Days, weeks, months, and finally years elapsed, but never again did tidings reach the family of Estelle and Eugene of the fair stranger who had graced their eventful wedding day. Her memory was ever present with them, but a strange check seemed to guard their lips when they would have conversed on her mysterious advent amongst them, and at length they thought, but never *spoke* on the subject.

The day came at last when their venerable grandmother

was to pass away, and her weeping children stood round her couch of peace, receiving their last adieus and blessings. She bade them ever remember the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. "God, my children," she added, "sends you the poor and homeless as an exercise for that charity of which he is the eternal pattern. He feeds the wandering ravens, and provides for the houseless sparrows. Go, then, and do likewise. Above all, entertain strangers hospitably, for in so doing *you may entertain angels unawares.*"

"Great-grandmother," lisped a golden-haired child of Estelle, "was not that an angel who put out blind Albert's eyes for a year and a day, in order to save us all from being robbed and murdered?"

"I know not, my little one," replied the parting mother; "for this is the only token she left us on this earth that she had ever been amongst us. I found it on the pillow where her fair head had lain, on the morning after the wedding. Take it, Estelle; it belongs to your set of pearls, and was doubtless designed by the stranger as your bridal gift."

So saying, she placed in Estelle's hands a beautiful pearl cross of the same fashion and workmanship as that which had belonged to her ancestress, to whose home in spirit land her soul then winged its eternal flight.

CHRISTMAS STORIES.—No. 2.

FAITH, OR MARY MACDONALD.*

Chapter I.

IN a poor suburb of one of the great modern Babylons—called Bath, England—stands a plain, unpretending brick house, to which neither name nor fame is attached, yet whose purpose might command more real interest than any other building within its humble locality, notwithstanding that the gorgeous palaces and sumptuous domes of the proudest aristocracy in the world are within a range of a few miles from it. The idle and speculative character of a luxurious Briton cherishes the mystic, and finds food for the imagination in the unreal and incomprehensible; yet does this plain house (containing within itself a wonder of wonders) pass unnoticed; and if any popular record exists of its establishment, I for one have industriously searched for it in vain.

There are those, however, who have been admitted within its mysterious walls, and realized for themselves the actual fact that *there is* an asylum for utterly destitute children, maintaining some hundreds of helpless orphans, (such, especially, as have no known claim on home or family,) entirely through the provision made by an influence which the world calls indifferently by the names of

* Written for "*The Spiritual Telegraph*," in 1857.

"chance," and "Providence," and which the founder of the establishment terms "Faith," but which modern spiritualism might refer to more natural and comprehensible influences.

It is now some four or five years since the friend from whom I derived my information visited the "asylum," although, in its unpretending existence, it did not even lay claim to the distinction of this name. I so style it, however, for perspicuity. My friend found a large number (some hundreds, I believe) of totally destitute children, provided with a happy home, and an excellent moral education, by one poor, simple man, who, without a single sixpence to call his own, had founded, and for years maintained, this institution, without any income, revenue, certain assistance, or earthly dependence whatever, but the righteousness of his cause, the singleness of his noble purpose, and the efficacy of an unwavering faith in prayer. I believe his name is Muller; I also think he is a German, or of German descent, but of this I am not certainly informed. His own simple account of his glorious institution is as follows: —

"I loved, pitied, and longed to provide for those suffering little ones," he said, "of whom the Saviour described the kingdom of heaven as composed, but whose only heritage on earth was the dreadful workhouse — association with the depraved, the outcast, and the criminal, or a death by starvation on the cold wayside, where the guardians of the public streets scarcely allow the poor orphan to lay its little head to die. There are," he admitted, "many fine, nobly endowed and nobly supported charitable institutions for all classes of want and suffering; still," added the good man, "I look around in vain for a *home*, *a real home*, with pure moral culture, for little ones too young to have earned

for themselves the legacy of wretchedness, to which the destitute orphan is doomed.

"For such I hired this house, without one shilling on earth to pay the rent. For such I procured the loan of furniture, without an earthly prospect of repayment. For such I prayed to the Father with that faith which Jesus promised to those who seek it; and for such I found that prayer and faith would indeed move mountains and cast them into the sea. Day by day this institution has been supplied from unforeseen sources with all that is needful to its support and prosperity. Kind hearts were made aware, I scarcely know by what means, of my labors, and influenced to send me money and means, and that always at the hour of need. If the crowd of little sufferers seeking for shelter exceed my means of accommodation, I pray to God as best I may, and in my imperfect speech present to him a list of my material wants; and, lo! with the morning's light abundance comes; and whether it be meal for our daily bread, warm clothing for my little ones, winter blankets or summer fruits, I ask all in prayer from the Father of all, *and never fail to receive it.* Our stock is now low, and next week will bring many expenses; but these *will be met* — I know not from whence; I have no earthly source on which to rely for a barrel of flour, or a penny of money; but *it will come* — ay, even as abundantly as the manna in the wilderness to Israel."

Let us quit this blessed evidence of a true faith and simple trust in God, with the fervent prayer that the gift of so much child-like reliance on our all-sufficient and beneficent Father may descend on the wings of the angels who are now among us, bearing us glad tidings of love, and stimulating our faith with the performance of supermundane acts which far outrival even these evidences of the

excellent and benevolent Muller's communion with spirit intelligence.

I will close my account of this generous and true Christian with an earnest recommendation to all who visit the old country, to find out and regale their kind hearts with the sight of Muller's well-ordered, exquisitely neat, pure and beneficent illustration of that selfsame faith which in ancient days raised Lazarus from the dead, and in these modern times is training up many a soul for eternal life, which might else have lingered in the dark ages of night, which sin ever entails on its victims.

I have quoted the above case as a living illustration of a little biography of one who has long since passed away to the mansion in the spheres which a similar exercise of faith in her earth career has procured for her. As the circumstances which I am about to relate occurred in a remote part of Scotland, and nought remains in living evidence of my tale but the evergreen memory of its principal subject, I deemed it necessary to show that there are *still living* examples of the very same deeds, which, if related without such substantial corroboration of their possibility, might seem fabulous.

With this preamble, I proceed to narrate, in my own words, rather than those of the gossips from whom I derive my information, the particulars of my little "Christmas Story."

'Twas Christmas eve; a deep and continuous snow storm had almost blocked up the narrow streets of the busy town of G., far away in the remote parts of Scotland. The rolling of carriages, and the hum of eager, holiday-making foot passengers was fast dying out of the darkening streets. Twilight was lingering around the desolate city, deepening the gloom without, but adding a tenfold charm to the glow-

ing hearths and holly-decked rooms that sent out many a bright reflection through the crimson-curtained windows on the white glare of the frozen streets. As the heavy gloom of the winter night stole on, the wind rose, and swept in dismal cadence round the now deserted old market place, where once a royal palace had graced the scene. Buttress and arch were gone; tower and gateway were fast mouldering beneath the weight of centuries; but still a substantial portion of the building remained, and being converted into a hotel, gleamed cheerily on the silent square beneath, with its hundred windows illuminated by glowing fires and many lamps. Still the scene was a dismal one; and in that very spot, at that hour, and in the midst of a driving storm of icy sleet, wind, and rain, the genius of winter seemed to expand his frozen wings, and reign in the place of the dead kings of old, monarch supreme of the once royal city.

Then it was that, amid the drifting sweep of the snow king's wings, a thin, bent form might be seen to emerge from a neighboring arch, and painfully making his way up the court-yard of the hotel, plant himself opposite one of the well-lighted windows, and commence playing — yes, *actually playing* — a merry tune on his violin! Merry, did I say? God help the ears that could pronounce that dismal wail a merry one; yet it was meant for such; and when the meagre performer had concluded "Come, haste to the wedding," he struck up "Drops of brandy," "Paddy Carey," and many other jovial tunes, all tending to impress the listener with the belief that Christmas was indeed a very merry time, and that a cheerful imagination was busily at work scraping up all manner of merry reminiscences in its honor.

I suppose the violin must have been a very dismal one,

for somehow the spirit of the old tunes seemed dead, and actually converted their pleasant strains into something strongly suggestive of a requiem, as they swept and fluttered around the court-yard on the sigh of the moaning blast. So thought, it would appear, the dissatisfied performer; for after shifting from one cold foot to another, blowing on his benumbed fingers as if to inspire them with fresh life, and straining his bow again and again to his task, a change seemed to come over the spirit of his dream; his frozen arm moved slowly and wailingly over the mournful exponent of his breaking heart, and "Home, sweet home," broke through the howling of the blast like the cry of a despairing soul on the shores of eternity. Crack, crack, crack! — a half-frozen, complaining window is heard gently yielding to the strong arm and testy will which strives to raise it. Then a rough voice follows, —

"Here, fellow, take yourself off with that cursed wailing; it is enough to give one blues, or freeze one to death, to hear such cold music — be off with ye."

Bang, crack, bang! and down goes the window again, and a penny falls on the snow. The violinist picks it up, replaces his torn hat, which he had humbly doffed when the window was open, produces a piece of old baize in which he carefully envelops his poor instrument, and tucking it under his arm with all the care that a father would take of a very precious child, he turns and leaves the court. 'Tis evident he means to play no more that night. The fiddle so carefully disposed of will not be produced again. Perhaps he fears this precious one will feel the cold as much as its shivering master; perhaps the single penny which he had earned that day was such a mine of wealth that he needs no more. It may be that he has travelled far, is too cold, too tired. Ah, yes, it is the

latter; for see, he limps; and often, when he turns down one narrow lane after another, and the driving blast impels his thin form against the wall or house rails, he pauses and leans wearily for support, as if less susceptible of the bitter night than the intense lassitude of physical suffering.

Once he sits down within a sheltered doorway, and makes as if he would repose there a long time; but no, he may not stay there long: the door opens; a liveried servant appears on the threshold, and looks forth at the wintry scene. The violinist starts up. A fine livery! — that is a sign he has been resting at a rich man's porch; and so this worldly-wise man speeds away in haste. 'Tis evident he is a keen judge of human nature, this itinerant musician.

"Home, sweet home!" *sweet, ever sweet*, even to the beggar, who mounts, with slow and often protracted step, one stairway after another, until, in one of the poorest and meanest of lodging houses in that rich old city, he reaches a rickety ladder, mounts it, and enters a roofless and miserably dilapidated garret. Yet the place is neither lonely nor unfurnished; for in one corner is a heap of straw, and on it lies extended a beautiful but sickly-looking girl, of about seventeen years of age. There is light, moreover; and O, joy! that light proceeds from a turf fire which blazes up cheerily as the master enters, and reflects a ruddy glow on a wan, pale face, a meagre, shadowy form, and the long, silver locks which denoted that the poor musician was old — very old.

"Dear father, how late you are! and, ah me! how tired and worn you look to-night!" cried the young girl, making a feeble effort to rise from the straw to which a terrible attack of rheumatism had for many days confined her.

"Be still, Mary," replied the old man, in a low, hoarse tone. "Do not attempt to move, darling; I am come to wait on you at last. See," he added, taking a small roll of bread from his hat, "here is the fruit of my earnings this day; and here," producing a solitary penny from his pocket, "as I suppose I may not patrol the streets on Christmas day, — here is the provision I have made for to-morrow."

A deep silence ensued, broken by a low sob from the girl, when the father asked where she had procured that glorious fire from, and who had had the mercy to kindle it for her.

"Why, who but poor old Betsey, father?" sobbed the invalid. "Who but the poor, the very poorest in this poor house, would come to help such desolate creatures as we, father, do you think?"

"Nay, Mary, you are wrong there, child," murmured the old man; "*there is One* who never fails to help the poor, and he is here to-night."

"Whom do you mean, father?"

"One, Mary, who comes alike to rich and poor; his footsteps have been echoing in my ears for many a sad and weary day, Mary, and now they have crossed the threshold with me; even this night, his hand is upon me; and, Mary, Mary! O my child, my desolate one! do you not see I am dying?"

A shriek — a heavy fall, and the miserable girl knelt beside the dying musician, as he lay, now indeed at the last gasp, beside the straw pallet of his unhappy companion. The silver cord was stretched to its fibre; the golden bowl, long shivered in the rough billows of adversity, had been, that wretched wintry day, shattered in the blast, and was now melting. How fast the rudely-shaken

sands run! Yet has the dying musician come home, "sweet, sweet home," to breathe his last. One by one the strings of his old cremona snap in the biting frost, and as the last parting cord strikes his dull ears, he raises his eyes to those of his Mary — his poor, nearly crippled Mary.

"Father," she whispers, "I am not weeping, — see, see, father, here are no tears; — I am not sorry, either, father, — I am *glad*, very *glad*, because you are going home."

"I too am glad, my precious one," he replies. "When I am gone, you will be far better cared for than you have been. The white-haired old musician was not enough of himself; he wanted help, and sought it from man, not God; and you, unhappy child, have thought too much of your father to remember the One we both have in heaven. When I am gone, you will be all his own; seek him, child; seek him more diligently than I have done; and he will be a better Father to thee than I have been. Hadst thou neglected me, or been undutiful to me, my Mary, I might have loved thee less, and caring only for myself, not have perished with cold and hunger this night; but it is not so with him. He maketh his sun to shine on the just and the unjust, and he never forsakes those who put their trust in him. Lo, he comes, through his ministering angels, to release me this terrible night."

The last grains are falling — the hour-glass is well nigh spent.

"Mary, I played some of my prettiest tunes to-day before the door of a great rich man I know by sight — Alderman Driggs. The servants came and drove me from the door, saying their master was very ill, and could not be disturbed by my noise. A fine carriage drove up in

haste then, and a doctor stepped out. They bade him hasten, for the great alderman was dying of apoplexy. I stopped again at his door to-night; but as I sat me down to rest, a servant opened it, and I shrank away in haste. Ere I left the steps, I saw—I am sure I cannot be mistaken —*I saw the alderman himself come out, pass me swiftly, and beckoning me to follow, was lost in the snow drift!* Could it really have been he? Or was it a spirit? Hark, the passing bell! Some one has preceded me to the land of souls! Should it be Alderman Driggs, I shall soon join him. There will be no difference between us then, Mary. I *have* nothing to take with me; he *can* take nothing with him. I wonder, Mary, if the soul of the rich man and the spirit of the starved beggar will go to the same place? They would be ill fitted to meet, methinks — the tenants of the castle and the roofless garret! Ah me, many have died on his doorsteps from want and hunger! Why did he not make laws to feed them? Ah, well, we shall know who is to blame, when we meet at 'compt.'"

The Christmas day which followed this dreary night opened on the state pall and plume-canopied bed which held the mortal remains of Alderman Driggs; it shone, too, on the wasted features of the dead musician and the crippled, orphan Mary.

Chapter II.

In an old-fashioned village, not many miles from the populous town of G., is a little shop more remarkable for the ingenious amalgamation (in minimum quantities) of every conceivable article applicable to the daily wants of humanity, than for the excellence of its wares, or the distinguished character of its patrons. Yet has the "gen-

eral shop" of Glenfillan even now a monumental kind of reputation, and that principally from being a portion of the old ruinous building once celebrated by the name of "Mary Macdonald's Refuge." At the time when I first made its acquaintance, I found it so difficult to decide between the merits of its multitudinous temptations, that I should long have halted between the fascination of gingerbread lions and ell-wide broadcloth, genuine imitation lace and patent gridirons, had not a string of ballads, ostentatiously spread out on a barrel of Epsom salts, met my view; and especially captivated by the title of one for which I had long been searching in vain, I invested a single penny in the purchase of three clear yards of literature, and hastened off with my prize.

The poem, whose possession I had made this great investment to obtain, purported to be "a genuine account of a remarkable vision which came down on that *God-fearing and chosen vessel* of grace, Mary Macdonald, on the lamentable night when her father deceased in the streets of G., from cold and hunger. God save all pious people from the like heavy dree."

Finding it hopeless, however, to attempt culling any historical facts from the clouds of glory and flutter of angelic pinions with which the poetical account of Mary's vision, in the pen of the village rhymer, became charged, I was fain obliged to fall back on the memorandums of this remarkable woman's life, which had been partly taken down from her own lips by the minister who had attended her in her dying hour. By this it appeared that, within an hour after the spirit of the weary, life-worn musician had sought its heavenly home, a deep sleep fell upon his miserable orphan, from which she described herself as being aroused by a soft hand grasping her own. Upon

unclosing her eyes, they were met by the appearance of a female, so beautiful, so graceful, so perfect in the symmetry of face and figure, that poor Mary thought she had never before known how very lovely the human form might appear. No terror filled her heart, and though she knew it was a spirit, she experienced neither awe nor surprise; in fact, a tender feeling, almost amounting to joy, possessed her whole being; for though the lovely apparition did not speak, she *knew* she gazed on the *angel* of her mother.

For a moment she turned her gaze on the lifeless body of her father, and was surprised to find that the sight inspired her with no emotions of grief; yet, though she regarded the mortal clay with indifference, she experienced a deeper feeling of affection for him than even her fond heart had ever known before. Still, his very memory seemed to fade away into the dim vistas of the past, as she once more fixed her admiring eyes on the beautiful vision of her mother. O, how shining were the waving tresses of her sunny hair! Eternal summer seemed to flit in the roses and lilies of her flower-painted cheeks. What joy it would be to touch those feathery-looking fingers, that seemed as if formed of the silver clouds that line the autumn moon!

But deeper than all are the profound mysteries of eternal joy and love which shine in the beams of those loving eyes. How good she looked! how tender! how unselfish! and O, weary, mourning inhabitant of earth, how happy, how supremely happy do the angel spirits of the good appear, when purified from the dross of earth's error and mortal grossness! They thus in visions revisit us.

"Ah me!" thought the wondering child of sorrow, while she gazed on this beautiful vision; "it is good for me to be afflicted, that out of the fires of adversity my purified

spirit may aspire to the happiness that beams from the angels of the departed. Pile up! crush me! press me down beneath your weight, O afflictions of the earthly hour! What are ye to the joys of eternity? or, rather, shall I not receive ye as inestimable *blessings*, destined to fit me for a home too pure, too gloriously bright, to be attained without the pains of mortal existence, and the penalties attached to mortal sin."

But now the scene changes, and without speech, or sign, or act of volition on her own part, Mary is borne away, far, far away through the boundless realms of space, and by her side, seemingly near, and yet as if separated by insurmountable distance, floats her angel guide, and her smile of divine love, ever beaming on the mortal, seems a reflex of the spirit of the omniscient Father of all.

They pause. Alas! alas! is this the bourn for which they traversed the immeasurable space? O, the horror, the desolation of the scene! On every side, above, around, thick, impenetrable snow! Mary feels no cold, experiences no suffering; a strange, protecting sphere seems to enclose her in a little world, apart from every scene she traverses. Her eyes are now her only medium of sensation, and through them she sees that the world never realized, nor imagination fabled, any spot half so cold and dreary as this world of snow; and yet she perceives, in this woful region, a world analogous to the earth. Land is there, ocean, sky, and atmosphere, and yet all is *snow*, or, rather, as she seemed to read it, a cold so intensified that it presented to her still mortal senses no idea but that of *snow;* and there, wandering to and fro, she sees — O, piteous sight! — *human forms* — men and women, *but no children;* and as, in the land of souls, every one's earth career stamps its impress on their spirit, until the enfranchised soul appears in the un-

veiled reality of its most secret thoughts and principles, so Mary perceives at a glance how many of the suffering inhabitants of this dreary region have been great, and rich, and powerful on earth; and because they neglected to feed the hungry, visit the sick, and clothe the naked, whom the great Steward of humanity committed to their care, in the persons of the poor, how these unhappy ones had to redeem their wasted opportunities in spheres of spiritual suffering analogous to those of their neglected fellow-creatures. And Mary, looking still more eagerly upon this mournful picture, beheld a shivering, meagre spirit, in the appearance of a wasted female. A mass of shadowy drapery seemed to envelop a form which swayed and bent as in the fierce sweep of the frozen blast. Suddenly this piteous figure pauses, and, turning a compassionate glance upon a still more deplorable object, who crosses her path, she removes a portion of her own drapery, and places it on the exposed shoulders of the stranger; and with the act, lo! a bright flame shoots upward from her brow, expanding into many fair and luminous shapes, all flitting joyously around the now brightening form of the compassionate one; a light mist envelops her form, while a lustrous angel hand is reached forth, and the whole group disappears into a brighter home, earned by the one unselfish step in the ladder of progress. But who is this, who, with the wild glare of impotent rage and the fierce scowl of unaccustomed suffering, dashes through the mournful throng with words of alternate imprecation and supplication? His garments are costly, yet the shivering form, exposed to the horrors of the biting atmosphere, is seen quivering with pain and cold beneath them. His limbs are portly and well covered, yet the gnawing pangs of unsatisfied hunger glowers on his eager animal face, while the parched lips and burning eyes

add terrible force to his frantic cries of "Drink! wine! wine! the wine of the grape! — the death of memory! the grave of the all-too-acute senses!"

Some mocking ones pass him by, and jeeringly tell him that he is a spirit now, and has no more need of food, and clothing, and drink; but he savagely points to his own terrible appearance, whereon the appetites of his gross and selfish nature have been engraved by the deeds of his earth career, and shouts aloud for leave to return to the world, that he may live a better and more useful life, and make of his spirit a nobler emblem than that of the animals, whose gross natures he has converted his own soul to, but may never again gratify.

With despair and horror Mary recognizes in this appalling picture one whom the world called "a very good sort of a man" — "an honest man" — "a church-going, rate-paying, senate-house-speaking man" — the well-to-do, worthy, substantial Alderman Driggs — the man from whose doorstep her dying father had been driven, and whom she looked on now with wonder and amazement; for although on his unmasked spirit she could not detect a single act which the world of *her* knowledge could challenge or stigmatize as unlawful, she gazed in vain for the record of any one *kind* act which could enable the pure and loving of heaven to approach and lead him to a happier place.

She remembered that he had been famous for his good dinners and profuse hospitality. Alas! their impress on his spirit was only gluttony, self-indulgence, and ostentation. She recollected seeing his name ever at the head of long lists of donations to public charities. His naked spirit now revealed the impelling spring of these charities to have been pride, or rivalry with a richer neighbor.

She had heard him quoted as a "brilliant politician," a

"successful tradesman," and a "*just* landlord;" and even now she recognized these several characters in the shivering being whose heart, memory, and spirit so agonizingly clung to the possessions of earth, not one of which he had been able to bring with him through the stern portals of the tomb.

Here Mary found no actual representation of the fabled hell of the church, no material place of torture, no delineation of real *physical* suffering; but with as much pain as surprise she beheld a state of existence actually formed by the experiences of earth, and a tangible mode of life growing up around the new-born spirit exactly correspondential to the development of the spirit in its human pilgrimage.

"O Father of the universe," she thought, "now indeed will I pray for strength to live so that I may not fear to die. Not in the tortures of an eternal condemnation, designed by a vindictive Creator, but in the hell of an evil conscience, shall the penance of the evil-doer be performed; and when the hypocrite is unmasked, and the specious pharisee of the city stands in his desolation bereaved of his earthly gods, and more naked in the accumulated misery of his shorn splendors than the unconscious infant in its first inhalation of life, then, O Father, in judgment remember mercy, and make the sinner once more even as a little child."

Alas! Mary knew not even then the real nature of life — that it is not only *compensative*, but *retributive;* that a death-bed repentance, or the momentary remorse induced by pain, cannot cleanse the defaced image, and that the stamp of sin can only be effaced by the higher and holier impress of virtue. This idea of progress beyond the grave, self-atonement, and individual responsibility, was new to Mary,

as it would be to millions of church-instructed Christians, and she panted to return to the rudimental plane of earth, that even in the bitter waters of adversity she might purify her spirit for the brighter and nobler stage of existence to which it was tending.

Even as she thought upon these things, the mists arose in curling and deepening masses over the icy region upon which she had been gazing. A flutter, as of waving wings, was around and about her; fragrance more exquisite than had ever been exhaled from the fading blossoms of earth, steeped her senses in delight. There was light, and an atmosphere of radiance, every where. No distinct scene could she realize, and yet she gazed around her, pining for companionship in her new-born joy.

Her beautiful spirit-guide, where was she? She was alone, and yet a feeling of rapture and love, such as she had never before experienced, converted her solitude into Elysium. And now strains of delicious music fill the air, swelling, receding, transporting the listening ear with its wondrous sweetness, yet proving to the sage and philosophic student into the mysteries of progressive life how surely the very arts, sciences, and minutest development of the human mind have their birth in human life, only to be perfected in the worlds of progress beyond. The music she now imbibed as heavenly food to her spirit, though perfect in its union of melody and concord, was neither strange nor unnatural to her ears. She felt its beauty to be the result of progress, its excellence the merely high development of human musical organization; and even though it realized her wildest visions of angelic sounds, she could trace its birth back to the dim ages, when the waving bulrushes by the rivers of Palestine suggested to Tubal Cain the effects which air and reeds might produce, in imitation of that

harmonic idea which pervades the universe, and is typified by man in the sweet concord of musical sounds.

But O, rapture! what is it amid these sounds divine that thrills her very soul, and sends the blood rushing in tumultuous currents through her veins? The wild and pathetic cadence of an instrument, only analogous in words to the idea of an exquisitely-toned violin, wandering fitfully through a thousand fanciful reminiscences of "Home, sweet home;" and there, before her very eyes, encircled by clouds of bright and lustrous forms, stands the glorious and spiritual resemblance of her beloved, dead father. *She knows it is he*, although thin white hairs bedeck his forehead no longer — although that forehead is smooth, not furrowed — although his garments are of light, not rags — although youth, and health, and strength radiate in his loving eyes, and hunger, and cold, and poverty are seen no more.

She feels at length her senses reel, her brain oppressed, while a joy too great for utterance chokes the throbs of delight with which she strives to greet him. But even while she grasps the air in her vain efforts to reach the glorious vision, his tender, loving voice, mellowed to the harmonies of his new spirit life, pronounces these words: "Go back to earth, my beloved one; cherish well the precious boon of life; feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and care for the widow and the fatherless."

Something of her old feeling of helplessness, poverty, and incapacity, at this moment came rushing, like a cold chill, upon the child of earth. In an instant it was answered; for the bright swarm of happy angels, parting on either side, disclosed a single radiant star in a cloudless firmament of blue, while above it, in golden letters, whose burning fire entered her heart, and never after left it chill or desolate, she read this single word — "Faith."

The remainder of her vision has never yet found a mortal exponent. Enough it is to say that morning's light found her *calm, tranquil, and fully restored to health*, preparing her dead father's remains for the last service which she could ever render him on earth.

Chapter III.

It is the morning after Christmas day. A Christmas in the north of Scotland is ever a season whose rigorous bitterness demands all the genial appliances of this grand religious festival to render it endurable; yet this Christmas seemed to exceed in severity any which Mary Macdonald had ever known, as she plodded her toilsome way amidst the driving rain and whirling sleet which enshrouded her as in an icy, moving mist: still she held on her way bravely, and only slackened her pace as she approached a fine, old-fashioned edifice, to which it seemed her purpose was tending. It was a grand, baronial-looking mansion, and its massive, yet antique, magnificence bespoke wealth and power.

Mary paused before it, ascended the flight of steps which reached the door, raised the knocker, and then stood a moment in deep thought; a flash of intelligence, in an instant, dispelled the perplexed look which her features had worn. The settled purpose which had grown out of her first vision of interior life returned, and, retracing her steps, she quitted the house, and started off on her journey afresh. After traversing many streets and squares, the wayfarer paused at another door not inferior in grandeur to the first; but here again an inward monitor seemed to urge her to quit the steps at the very moment when she should

demand the admittance she had evidently come to seek; in fact it seemed as if Mary was in spirit the very sport of the winds, whose mad fancies urged her to and fro in their wild revel. On again, once more, the threadbare figure is seen struggling forward amidst the icy whirlwind; but this time her step is more rapid, her manner more assured; she pulls out of her father's old worsted glove, in which she has enveloped her shivering fingers, a scrap of paper on which several addresses are copied. On the third name she fixes her eyes for a moment, then, gazing around with an uncertain air, she again directs her weary steps to another but less pretending house than either of the former; and now, too, a change seems to come over the spirit of her dream, for when, in response to her timid knock, a servant in handsome livery appears, Mary firmly, but modestly, requests to see Mr. McManners upon business.

Calmly enduring the look of wondering scrutiny with which the hesitating jockey regards her, Mary, by the force of steady and resolved will-power, seems to enforce the delivery of her message, and within a few minutes of its utterance, she actually finds herself in a splendid library, and in the presence of the proprietor of the mansion. Mr. McManners was an elderly, unprepossessing-looking man, on whose brow the weight of domestic bereavements and financial speculations had stamped hard and repulsive-looking furrows. His was a name unknown in the annals of *public* charity. Neither as governor of a hospital, patron of fancy fairs, nor contributor to newspaper benevolences, had the name of McManners ever gathered the gilded laurels of public fame; yet the furrows of his hard brow relaxed, as the ragged child of misery stood before him, and his own hand placed the shivering girl in one of his gilded chairs by the warm fireside. Per-

haps Mary was unprepared for this reception; her experience of life might have taught her to expect that one on whom misfortune had stamped the name of beggar in such legible characters should be either driven from the door of the prosperous and happy, or treated to the contemptuous crust in the meanest corner of the mansion of plenty; perhaps the contrast to such a reception might have shaken the feeble sands of resolution which misery had nearly crushed out of her organization. Certain it was, that for some minutes, the high-strung chords which had goaded her on to this first effort of action under supermundane guidance quivered and nearly snapped under the unaccustomed breath of human sympathy, and the poor orphan leaned back in the proffered chair, uttering sobs so deep and heart-rending that they evidenced the pouring forth of an agony which would have dethroned sense and life alike, had not the fountains of nature been thus opened for the relief of the overcharged springs of human grief. O, beautiful Nature, how divine are thy workings! How truthful thy unerring laws! How majestic in its boundless might the influence of thy simple and comprehensive ways! Had Mary Macdonald placed before the cold, stern magistrate McManners an elaborate detail of her case and requirements, it would have been subjected to the careful judgment of rule, calculation, scrutiny, cause, and effect, and, in all probability, through the intricacies of too cunningly fenced in judgment on the one hand, and elaborated statement on the other, the chords of invisible sympathy would have remained untouched, and the fine links which angel fingers weave for the unison of loving human hearts been lost or torn beneath the mystery of cold, conventional language.

McManners long forebore to interrupt the flood of agony

whose magnetism now pervaded the strong atmosphere of his study, waking up the tones of remembered grief in his own heart, hanging dew-drops of sorrowful memory on the dark volumes around, piercing his inner consciousness with a keen sense of his affinity with his suffering brethren, and filling his hard eyes with the irrepressible waters of sympathy, which, welling up beneath the touch of the angel of human kindness, never again slumbered in his awakened heart.

"Tell me your grief, my poor child," he at length murmured, "and whatever its source, be assured the hand of human brotherhood shall be extended in its aid."

"O sir," replied the weeping girl, "I came here under some strange impulse — I scarce know from whence — to *demand* money of you to bury my father, whose remains lie yonder, cut off by cold, hunger, and desolation. I meant to *claim* of you means to pay the rent of our roofless garret, fire to warm my frozen limbs, and guidance for my desolate and orphan state; but, ah me! the heart that was steeled against humanity in its cruelty and pride melts like the snow beneath the sun of unlooked-for sympathy. O sir, let me depart with my rebellious mission *against*, and not *for*, my fellow-creatures unspoken."

Not yet, however, did Mary Macdonald depart. For some hours the dim twilight of the magistrate's study echoed to the heart communion of these two strangely combined atoms of infinity; and when they parted, the effects of that communion, of which truth was the foundation, and angelic love the inspiration, stamped its effects upon the whole of their future lives.

As the heroine of an imaginative tale, Mary Macdonald should have returned to her lonely dwelling in the magistrate's coach, if not actually freighted with his instant and

unalterable love; following up which we should have had doubts, hopes, fears, the whole ending in a wedding, with a minute description of the bride's trousseau, white satin, orange blossoms, &c.; but in this o'er true tale we have a picture of the *realities* of life, and no fervid imagination can deck the page of history with half the mystery and beauty which its own unvarnished simplicity presents.

Thus, then, we have only to relate the fact that Mary returned to her poor garret with ample means to bury her dead from her sight, with the decency and honor due to the casket which has once contained the immortal spirit most dear to us of all the sons of men; that, by the influence and representations of her stanch and deeply-interested friend, Mr. McManners, a small sum (such a one as she herself declared to be sufficient for her future proceedings) was raised; and when all was complete, Mary Macdonald removed herself to the outskirts of a manufacturing town, about sixty miles from the scene of her late afflictions, and there commenced the following scheme of existence.

An old-fashioned manor house, which had long been tenantless from its evil reputation as a "haunted house," had been advertised by the proprietor as rent free to any satisfactory tenant. To secure the use of this building had been Mary's chief object in her choice of location; and when she took possession of her desolate habitation, she rejoiced to find it in every way adapted to her purpose. Before she lay down on the rough couch she had prepared for her first night's repose in her new home, she caused to be painted over the door these words, in large, distinct letters: —

"Refuge for Destitute Orphans."

For some few days her "Refuge" attracted more atten-

tion than inmates; the sudden and unostentatious advent of its projector took the good townfolks of her location by surprise; but when, day after day, her quiet figure might be seen flitting about among the respectable inhabitants around, modestly asking (though neither *begging* nor *demanding*) furniture, bedding, winter stores, and common provisions for her undertaking, an inkling of its remarkable nature became known, and, as is ever the case with the steady pursuance of one noble and unselfish purpose, highly appreciated.

Her daily labors ended, Mary would sit by her pine fire, its shimmering light glancing fitfully around the dark panels of her dreary abode, in the lone stillness of a wintry twilight, and calculate up what actual necessaries she must have to set her institution going, even in its initiatory workings — tables, chairs, beds, blankets, books, winter clothing, a little money, &c. All these items seemed to sum up into a formidable account; yet would this fragile and lonely flower, scarcely yet bursting into the womanhood of eighteen summers, resolve them into so many thorns in her road of progress, that had to be rooted out of her path, — or rather so many blossoms on the highway to eternity, whose possession was only the more essential to her future happiness from the difficulties which surrounded their attainment.

When questioned, in later years, upon her preliminary *modus operandi*, she would reply simply, "When I had completed my list of necessary articles for the next day's requirement, I would place my need in the form of a solemn prayer before my heavenly Father; and because I knew and felt that he had not in his wisdom endowed me with health and faculties, judgment and energy, to lie dormant in the impotent indolence of expecting faith alone, so the

conclusion of my communion with him was ever an appeal for inspiration, to guide those human efforts through which I recognized that it was his providential scheme to act.

"I believed in fixed laws for the governance of creation, which were immutable — a compensative scheme, too, which entails the consequences of every act upon its agent, and visits retributive happiness or misery alike upon commission or omission. Understanding, then, that our own faculties and senses are given us to be the mediums of accomplishing our own destinies, and recognizing in my mind a *special mission* from the sinless medium of Nazareth, namely, to 'feed my sheep,' I first and ever presented my wants, in my own imperfect manner, to my heavenly Father. I did so, no more doubting his *previous* understanding of them than I should discredit my earthly father's comprehension of his dependent children's needs; but independent of the harmonizing and elevating influence of prayer, I humbly opine that the blessings that are worth enjoying are worth soliciting in a hopeful and loving spirit. Be this as it may, I never in my life rose from an earnest communion with my heavenly Shepherd without an *interior* response; and in actual sense I derived that inspiration from my mental exercises which unfailingly guided my material efforts in the most successful channels. With each day's dawn I would go forth to seek aid and provision for my desolate little ones, from those to whom my interior guides directed me; nor did I ever ask in vain, or turn my steps, my energies, or abilities, to any idle effort, when seeking the necessary provisions for my houseless ones."

It is not our purpose any further to trace out the career of this noble-minded girl, who, in the early bloom of youth, loveliness, and intellect, determined to devote a life, un-

marked by the gratification of one single selfish aim or act, to the provision of a home for the most destitute and helpless portions of humanity — the lonely and forsaken orphans of the poor. Mary Macdonald never turned aside from her self-sacrificing career, even for one single instant. Hundreds loved, admired, and sought her hand in marriage; but her spouse was charity, and her devotion was life-long. She never knew the joys of maternity; yet hundreds of helpless little ones — the offspring of the prison and the gallows — may trace their rescue from a similar fate to the more than mother's love with which she cherished the bodies, no less than trained the spirits, of those poor waifs, who were cast rudderless and homeless on the broad ocean of life, to drift on the shoals of ruin, or float on the bright waves of human love, as chance or good fortune dictated.

Mary Macdonald never in her life owned a sum more than sufficient to defray her daily expenses, or could anticipate where the means were to come from which should provide for to-morrow's needs. *Yet it came* — came as surely as her nightly prayer was breathed, her daily labors renewed; as surely as the sick, the dying, and the homeless found their way to her ever-open door; as surely as the flowers returned in May, or the sun of summer dispelled the gloom of her own bitterly remembered Christmas snow storm.

Her "Refuge" is with her own crumbling remains. It exists only in spirit and meaning; in spirit, as many of the just, who have passed from earth to the homes of the blest, can testify in their eternity of happiness, by the good seeds which her generous hand planted; in spirit, as the light of this new and glorious dispensation brings us in contact with those pure and holy teachings of many an

angelic messenger, whose first lessons of truth and wisdom were lisped in her humble "Refuge;" in memory, ever! as long as the essence of good deeds shall bloom on earth; as long as the winter snows shall pierce the shivering nerves of the houseless poor, who still linger around our thresholds, like the dying musician of old, ready to carry their tale of suffering or comfort to the homes of eternity; and long, long after the slanting rays of the setting sun shall cease to gild the humble tombstone, now overgrown with moss and lichens, but still strewn by many a flower which tiny hands instinctively gather to adorn the resting place of her who so loved them in life, and which bears this simple inscription, "In Memory of Mary Macdonald. 'Feed my sheep.'"

THE WILDFIRE CLUB.

A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

CHAPTER I.

IN one of the remotest districts of the north of England, in the wildest parts of the border, hill, and glen country, there arose, about half a century ago, a sect of religionists of a strange, gloomy, and somewhat fanatical character. Their numbers were few, and their tenets so stern and uninviting, that they seldom made converts, and gradually disappeared from their accustomed haunts of meeting, dissolving into the mystery from which they sprang. They seemed to arise, like phantoms, into a short and ghostly existence; and even so would their very memory have passed away, had they not been rescued from oblivion by the aristocratic rank and influential station of their founder, a man whose name is now the bar sinister in the heraldry of a noble and important family of England's proud aristocracy.

With no veneration for the rank of these high and mighty of the land, but with very considerable respect for their feelings, we shall style this sect (named after their founder) the "Merlinites," and the hero of my story himself, Mr. Reuben Merlin. They professed adhesion to no existent form of religious opinion, no respect for creed, sect, worship, or church. Their whole system of

belief consisted in faith in the immortality of the soul, — a stern, exact, and uncompromising view of future rewards and punishments for *every act, word, and thought* of every human being, — together with implicit belief in the ability of the spirit (under conditions not yet understood by man) to manifest itself, after death, in the appearance it had assumed on earth. It will readily be understood that the *second* article of this creed was not very likely to recommend itself to popular practice, while the third was still more an unpalatable dose to the materiality of the nineteenth century; hence it followed that with the absence of the exciting motives which led to its foundation, the sect itself languished and died out, leaving only the few fragmentary facts which belong to the personal history of Reuben Merlin, as the superinducing cause of its origin.

I do not propose to give any detailed account of the mode in which I became acquainted with the following circumstances: to do so would draw aside the veil which sensitive feeling has hung around the dark portrait of an erring ancestor. Let it suffice that the main points of the history are too true to justify me in associating them with those who are now living.

It is more than half a century since a band of men, self-styled "*gentlemen*," (deriving a right to the title by birth, education, wealth, and standing, but forfeiting all claim to the character by the most lawless depravity and organized licentiousness,) assumed a cognomen strongly resembling that of "*The Wildfire Club*," heated to an extent which would not render its *actual* appellation altogether polite or reverential. As a mere compromise, therefore, with the decencies of life, although outraging the strict rules of orthography, we shall say that a set

of remarkably lively gentlemen, with strong tendencies to wine, women, and wickedness, banded themselves together for the better and stronger performance of outrageous license and midnight lawlessness, under the title of "The Wildfire Club." To scour the streets of villages, and even cities, insulting shrinking womanhood, playing off cowardly and often most fatal hoaxes on humble labor, decent trade, and helpless old age — to terrify children and feeble women, defraud tradesmen and servants — were among the least of these noble and aristocratic performances.

It would be too sickening to recount the list of outrages which were committed under the sanction of fashion and the designation of "eccentricity, "high spirit," "good fellowship," "gentleman-like style," and, above all, the "effervescence of *noble blood*." "That in the captain's but a choleric word, which in the soldier is rank blasphemy;" and so broken hearts and blighted names, ruined fortunes and desolated homesteads, broken bones and burnt farms, hideous excess and degrading language, — all that can sink the *low* man beneath the level of the beast, or elevate him to the gibbet, in the *high-life sphere* of Mr. Reuben Merlin, is so exceedingly funny and worthy of imitation, that our young nobility of to-day take to it as naturally as the inherited prerogatives of rank, genius, learning, and statesmanship, by which they become hereditary legislators. Look to it, Young America! and if you would not be left behind in the race of fashionable vice, read the legends of "The Wildfire Club," by way of theory, and hurry off to the gaming tables and drinking saloons, by way of practice.

One of the most orthodox practices of this choice crew was to celebrate the birth of the new year by a solemn

wedding of one of their number, the bride being of necessity under twenty years old, fair as a blossom, virtuous, and *unwilling*, — the latter clause rendering it, of course, absolute that she should be abstracted from her home. The meetings of the society were held at different members' houses, once a week; and in accordance with this practice the party were assembled, one Christmas night, at the bachelor residence of Reuben Merlin. The wine and wassail had done their work; with inflamed visages, and voices hoarse with wine and riot, these "*images of their Maker*" began eagerly to discuss the prospect they had of good sport for the ensuing new year. The lot had fallen to Rufus Rushton to be the bridegroom for the ensuing year, and loudly vociferous were the inquiries showered upon him as to whether he had selected a "*victim*" for the sacrifice. If this word read harshly to moralists in the nineteenth century, let them look abroad in our cities and towns; let them behold the thousands, ay, millions, of fair flowers who yearly fall a sacrifice to the vanity, passion, indifference, and depravity of such men as "The Wildfire Club" — young creatures, just blooming into early womanhood, insnared, like the unconscious bird, by the fowlers of life, in nets baited with a ribbon, a jewel, a bit of finery, a home for a starving father, bread for a dying mother. Is it not pitiful to see thousands of bright gems, which would form an immortal coronet round the brow of an honest man who knew how to win and wear its lustre, hourly bartered for the perishing goods of earth, sacrificed to the Molochs of man's basest passions, then to be trampled under the foot of the despoiler, because his own hand has dissipated its fragrance? The memoirs of "The Wildfire Club" are *true!* If they seem strange, look around

you, and confess they fall short of our own modern experience.

To the clamorous demand for information touching the bride elect of the new year's orgie, Rufus Rushton maintained a contemptuous silence. He was a young man of noble family, with the stamp of high intellect and towering genius on his brow; but the iron of early dissipation had passed its hot fingers across that warm cheek, and the once lofty inspiration of a crushed soul looked out from the wreck himself had made, like the light which shone through Milton's "archangel ruined," only to show how the temple of his young life had been sacked, the flame upon the altar quenched forever.

"Tell us her name, where she lives, who she is to be. If you expect us to help you, you must uncover your game, Master Rufus!" shouted the revellers in noisy chorus.

"I neither ask nor require your help, gentlemen," coolly replied the rake; "my conquests are my *own*, and I generally fight my battles single-handed. The rules of our magnanimous order require the presentation of a fair bride; that she should be young is only natural, considering that most of our society are considerably lacking in the element of youth themselves — that she should be *unwilling* is doubtless a type that we begin the year in a spirit worthy the illustrious name we bear. Fear not, gentlemen; Madam Rushton shall not disgrace the scene of her most honorable initiation ——"

"By Heaven, he is chafing us!" cried the fierce founder of the club, Reuben Merlin; "but we will know who the dame is, and that without crossing swords either, Master Rufus," he added more mildly, as he noted the dangerous flash of the young man's eye; then rising, he whispered

to one of the grooms in attendance, and continued: "We will have rare sport, too, Wildfires; we have here an old blind beggar, the most notable prophet that ever figured, out of Genesis. He goes about telling fortunes, and, by the mass! sees more of the future without any eyes, than any of us could with treble spectacles."

"You mean Blind Sandy, don't you?" replied one of the club. "Now, by all the saints, we'd better have the prince of mischief, old Beelzebub, amongst us at once; for this malicious old gospel shop does nothing but bring down abuse upon choice spirits like us, and will send the Wildfires to their master, if we let him spin our woof."

"No matter," cried the master of the house; "who cares whether it be to-day or to-morrow, since go we must? —as well make short work of it, and go when an extra warm fire will be acceptable. But here he comes." As he spoke, a tall old man, very thin, bent, and meagre, entered the room, leaning on a stick, and feebly groping his way forward with that peculiar, instinctive care, which bespeaks "total eclipse" of the glorious luminary of the body—sight. His dress was very poor, evincing the most abject condition of poverty; yet its extreme cleanliness, and the multitude of neat patches it bore, as loudly proclaimed the care of love and gentle tendance. A few thin white hairs, combed smoothly back, fell on his shoulders in wavy silver lines, leaving displayed, in all its noble proportions, a majestic brow and aquiline features, which had borne the stamp of singularly intellectual beauty. A little shaggy cur dog almost as threadbare in jacket, and quite as humble as his master, led him forward by a string, while a little basket, hung by way of collar at his neck, bespoke the calling of the blind beggar.

"Come here, old Sandy!" cried the rough master, "and give us a touch of your conjuring craft. We want to know what you see hereabouts of consequence to this noble company in particular, and therefore to the whole church and state of Great Britain in general."

"What do I *see*? Noble sir," meekly responded the beggar, wistfully raising his sightless orbs towards the speaker, "alas, I *see* no sun, no moon, no stars!—all is dark, dark forever!"

"Here, can ye see that, old Simeon?" chuckled one of the company, holding up a shilling before the beggar, who mechanically reached out his hand to take it, while the other, winking to the rest, jerked it away, remarking, "The old trader is no such fool after all—feeling is as good believing as seeing, any day."

"You shall have half a crown, and all the bones the hounds can't pick," interrupted the master, "if you, Sandy, (the arrantest cheat in all the North Riding,) can tell us the name of Rufus Rushton's new leman."

The young man, thus unceremoniously alluded to, moved restlessly in his seat, but kept silence, while the helpless mendicant, knowing, by former bitter experience, the ruthless natures of his tormentors, turned deprecatingly from one to the other, while they reiterated taunting offers and dangerous threats, in the hope of inducing him to exercise a gift for which he was highly famed, namely, that of "second sight." In vain the poor creature declared the visions which occasionally unclosed his prophetic lips were far beyond his *own* or any *human* control; the fierce revellers became the more determined as their victim manifested his impotency to gratify them. At length Rufus Rushton, speaking for the first time, contemptuously advised them to send the impostor away. "For," added

he, "he has never yet been known to prophesy aught but evil; and that's the only reason why what he says comes true."

It seemed as if the sound of Rushton's voice had broken the spell which opened the floodgates of inspiration to the seer's darkened vision; for interrupting the angry retort which Mr. Merlin was commencing to the last speaker, he drew himself up to the full of his remarkable height, elevated his ruined head like the towering crest of a mighty eagle, and in a voice whose deep, sonorous tones swept like a word of power through the high, vaulted hall, and fell in accents of magic potency on each awe-struck listener, he began thus: —

"Again I see the light of God's own blessed sun. Again I see the crisp white frost and snow shining in light on thousand glittering sparks, o'er field and forest, woodland, hill, and glen; I see its radiant beams reflected, too, in diamond panes, in yonder castle tower; it is a brave old ruin, lofty once, and grand. Kings, and knights, and dames of high renown, have held their court and wassail in its bowers; and though the fluttering ivy crowns its walls, and bats and owls hold kingdom in its courts, the atmosphere of royalty and pride lingers around its moss-grown, crumbling stones."

"'Tis my poor old barn he sees," whispered Rufus to his next neighbor. "The picture is graphic enough."

"I see," continued the seer, "the night veil drawing close. What banks of clouds are mustering in the sky! Ah me! the darkness gathers thickly on; and now the gloom is deeper, far more dense, than nature's night has ever known before. It stifles me! it takes away my breath! There is no moon to break this hideous night! 'tis darkness all impenetrable, black! and O, what sounds

break on my startled ear! Hark! heed ye not the deep-mouthed thunder's boom? Crashing elements have broken loose, and wildly howl the rushing requiem winds! See there! the forked lightning's dreadful glare whirls madly o'er the murky forest's lords; the parting giants wail their own death song, and felled beneath the stroke, lie blackened, dead!

"And now we stand within the castle walls. Let the loud tempest roar, the thunder crash, the livid lightning speed its awful flight! There's bonny work within that ancient fane! There's mirth, and revelry, and wassail loud. A dainty wedding, too, is forward now, and only waits the coming of the bride.

"List to the tolling of the castle bell! It booms the death of night and of the year! Slowly and sad the midnight hour proclaims another year is dead — another born; and woe are they who see its mournful birth! But stay! who are the revellers? Wait! I'll count. For every hour that tolls I see a face, bearing some well-known name; one more there is — the thirteenth man — and he stands off alone. An altar there is raised; a gibbering ape, in gown and cassock, takes the place of priest. An open book and wedding ring he holds, and all stand ready waiting for the bride. She comes! she comes! Room for the wretched dove, with broken pinion, ruffled plumes, and soiled! Behold her dragged along by vassal hands, to play her part enforced in this foul scene! O God, why beats my heart? My feeble knees, why do they bend and totter 'neath my weight? My eyeballs are on fire! O, how they burn! I'm blind again! I'm blind! Ah me! all's dark! O God! in mercy, one short moment more suspend the doom, and let me see her face!

"It may not be; the night has fallen indeed; the cur-

tain's drawn; the pageant is played out. Yet once again — what means that mighty rush, sounding like foaming torrents in mine ear? Hark! what a shriek! — a cry of human woe! 'tis raised by fourteen drowning mortals' cries! They sink! they sink! O, save them if you can! Thirteen most guilty souls are perishing; but that poor maid, that sinless victim, save! O, snatch her from the dreadful rushing tide! In vain, in vain! Ingulfed beneath the flood, the victim and destroyers all are still! The castle clock tolls one; the new year's born, and but one form is there to greet its birth. A royal crown he wears, a pale steed rides, — his robe a shroud, his throne the silent grave!"

As the beggar ceased, and, apparently exhausted with the prophetic paroxysm, crouched down beside his little dog, the indignant wrath of his listeners vented itself in threats and execrations against the prophet of evil. His promised reward was brutally denied him, and he himself thrust out of doors to the mercy of a storm little less pitiless than that which he had been describing.

As the fawning domestics, in servile imitation of their betters, kicked the poor little cur, limping and howling, after his master, the beggar cheerily bade his little companion "come on and never heed them; for, surely, Jack," said he, accustomed to address the four-footed partner of his toils as a friend and confidant, "they who kick the helpless and crush the fallen rob themselves of the only sure light by which we can grope our way to heaven — the guidance of Him who is eyes unto the blind, feet unto the lame, and the strength of all those who put their trust in him. Come along, Jack; hold up your head and carry your basket straight; God's good angels go along with us, and we'll yet have some pennies to carry home

to Margaret. O Margaret! O my child! may the bright ones who light thy father's darkened way hover around thy sinless footsteps, and leave me lonely and desolate, so that thou mayst be sheltered from the world's bitter storms!"

The father's prayer, wrung from the agony of a heart already shrinking beneath the shadow of the impending storm, was heard and granted, though, like all God's ways, in that deep mystery which man in vain seeks to penetrate.

"I will show you how to cheat the wizard and his prophecy of evil," cried Reuben Merlin, long after the beggar had been expelled from the door. "All assemble *here* on new year's eve; come by the road, and avoid the river. Do not even cross the ford above Brooke's Mill. *Don't go near Rufus's old shanty, above all things;* and do you, Rushton, bring your bride along, with help or without, as it pleases yourself; only swear, one and all, on new year's eve, one hour before midnight, to be in this very place, and we'll set defiance to flood and fire, though old Sandy, old Ocean, and Beelzebub himself were thundering at our gates. Do you swear?"

"*We swear, living or dead, we, fourteen members of 'The Wildfire Club,' will meet in this place at half past eleven o'clock, December* 31, 17—."

Chapter II.

The winds sung a wild and mournful requiem, the pelting storm descended in heavy gusts, and the genius of desolation swept with the icy cimeter of the bitter north wind the half-savage mountain region in which the

dwelling of Reuben Merlin was situated. It was the short winter afternoon of December 30, 17—, just five days after the commencement of our story's date, and two before the new year and the usual bridal, when the old beggar, known as blind Sandy, stood in the porch of Mr. Merlin's door, claiming admittance to an interview. His old, threadbare garments, no less than the dripping coat of the poor little storm-beaten cur that led him, bore testimony to the fury of the storm through which they had passed. The old man's uncovered white locks floated wildly in the blast, and every rag he wore, even to the tattered boots on his feet, streamed with rain.

A heart of iron could not have turned so piteous an object from the shelter of a roof; but if the servants of the Abbey — as Merlin's place was called — purposed doing so, they must have been overruled by the majestic and commanding tone in which the "fearsome prophet" (terrible by virtue of his reputation as a wizard, but still more to be dreaded when, as now, he appeared to be under the influence of his mysterious ecstasy) *commanded* that he should instantly be led to the master's presence. Arrived there, however, and suddenly confronted with the indignant owner of the house, the fortitude of the beggar appeared to forsake him. He stood for a moment apparently struggling to answer the stern demand of what he wanted, and then fell on his knees, and in a passion of tears and sobs, agonizing to witness in one so very old and miserable, implored the master, in the name of all he held most holy in heaven or earth, to give him back his daughter. Had he been sufficiently composed to have noted the effect of his words on his auditor, he must have acquitted him of any participation in the cause of his

grief, so astonished and affected did he appear to be at the nature of the appeal.

At length he succeeded in raising the unhappy suppliant, and in kind and earnest tones besought him to control his emotions, and give him a consecutive account of the loss he thus deplored. Then it was, amidst heavy sighs and in accents often choked by sobs, that the mendicant explained his case. He had, it seems, one only child, a blossom of summer beauty, the only stay of broken fortunes and ruined hopes, the prop of his abject old age, the sun of his waning life. So beautiful was this solitary ewe lamb, that the old man, terrified at the thought of subjecting her to the rude glances of a sensuous world, had secluded her in a remote little hut, and actually went forth to beg their daily bread, and ply his art as a mendicant ballad singer, rather than expose his gem to the eyes of men. He told how she wove baskets, which he went forth to sell; how craftily she knit and spun when they could beg flax; and above all, how, with her fairy footfall and joyous laugh, "*her sound*" went forth in his little hut like the echoes from a world of angels: he told, too, how, on the fatal Christmas night when he had appeared, with the dark mantle of prophecy thrown around him, in the midst of the revellers at the Abbey, and, the hour being late, and the night stormy, had sought shelter in an adjoining barn, he had returned to his hut the next day to find it empty; hour after hour he had waited to hear the sound of Margaret's approach, but he waited in vain. The hearth was cold, the embers extinguished — the light of the place had gone out forever. The wild winds bore no whisper from his lost one; and though his trembling feet and groping hands had gone over every inch of his little dwelling, and scoured every

bush, tree, or hollow in its neighborhood, he could *feel* no trace of his lost one. He had shouted her name till the hoarse throat refused to obey his still calling spirit; he had paced the hills, and glens, and rocks, and woods, and still returned, day and night, morning and eventide, muttering to himself and his little dog, "She will have come home by this time. Yes, yes, she must be home at last!" But she was *gone* — gone, gone forever! He knew it now, and he knew, too, how she had been spirited away, and by whom; and then, in still wilder agony, he went over the vision which he had described at Rufus Rushton's house, and frantically added his conviction that the veiled female, whose face he could not see, participating in the unholy bridal, would be his own kidnapped child.

Long and earnest was the conversation which ensued. Had the "Wildfires" heard its details they might have voted Mr. Merlin out of their body as a recreant member, who could by no means come up to the approved standard of wickedness; but there were other listeners to the dialogue, who conceived of it in another spirit, — bright, ministering angels, — divine agents in the great scheme of the world's government, who, marking the conflict in the soul of the worldling, and triumphing with him in the noble struggle of his better nature, stamped him with the seal of a mighty destiny, and registered him henceforth as one of the levers in the great machinery of human progress.

As the Dives and Lazarus of modern days parted in the door porch, the former said, —

"I have sworn to you, old man, and I will keep my word. Your wrongs in this matter shall be my own; and if, in the prosecution of our mutual search, I find Margaret in the possession of the father who gave me life, or

the brother who shared it with me, I will tear her from his arms, though my own life and his part in the struggle.

As he turned to reënter his library his servant met him with a pile of law papers, which were essential he should immediately examine; but although he knew that heavy mortgages were in danger of foreclosing on his estate, and that nothing but vigilance could save them, he neither touched nor thought of the papers, until he had written letters to every member of "The Wildfire Club." Their purport was universal; it was a strict charge to assemble as usual on the last day of the old year, — to be punctual to their hour of meeting — midnight, — but above all, to meet without fail at his own house. To Rufus Rushton, the bridegroom elect of the new year's orgie, the letter ran as follows: —

"As you are a man and a gentleman, a scion of an honorable house and a sworn brother of our order, I charge you to adhere to the terms of our oath. Bring your bride hither *a pure virgin.* Let her be as unwilling as you choose, but let her come hither to this bridal as *innocent* as the hour when she saw the light. Why I lay this charge upon you now, and thus solemnly, is on account of a matter whose deep import shall be unfolded to you when we meet."

The letter further proceeded to urge upon Rufus the obligation of the club to meet at *his* (Merlin's) house on the appointed night, with other details which he considered essential to his purpose. He then occupied himself diligently in the prosecution of his affairs, for which purpose it became necessary that he should devote his whole time to the business on hand. This he did, determining to spend the last day of the old year in his study, apart from all interference, until the hour arrived for the meeting of

the club. Previous to entering upon this arrangement, however, he despatched the letters he had written by trusty messengers, with "Speed, speed!" "Ride for your life!" impressed on each. He further stationed twenty strong men, all of whom wore plain citizen's dresses, but bore a striking military air and manner, in a retired part of the mansion, ready for a certain duty of which they had been previously well informed.

From the hour when the blind beggar had quitted the Abbey on the night of the 30th of December, the storm, which had been gathering force the whole day, appeared to rage with a concentration of power which threatened to overwhelm every spot of low ground in the country. Tiny brooklets were converted into foaming torrents and rushing watercourses. Picturesque waterfalls threatened to swell into destructive floods; mighty trees were uprooted, huge rocks hurled from their primeval resting-places, roofs and beams whirled high in air, and every where the genius of desolation appeared threshing the air with its mighty pinions. And still the winds howled and moaned, in forest, turret, and homestead, and still the rain poured down, and the huge black wings of the storm king spread a pall of darkness athwart the lowering skies.

Night fell, and as the hour of meeting drew nigh, the master emerged from his studio and proceeded to review his forces. The strange men whom he had introduced into his house were all in their places. The domestics, habituated to their master's vagaries, pursued their avocations with their accustomed immobility; but yet the mind of Merlin became troubled, when eleven o'clock came, and neither blind Sandy — for whom he had inquired many times — nor any of the messengers whom he had sent off

the previous night with missives to the club, made their appearance. It was not the rule of the association for the host to receive his guests, or even appear amongst them until the hour of midnight. A secret door, known to all, and commanded by all, at every house of meeting, led to their club room; and thus each member arrived without question, and awaited in profound silence the coming of the host to open the meeting.

It was at twelve o'clock to a second that Reuben Merlin, with a hand colder and more tremulous than he had ever before experienced, touched the secret spring of the door which led to Wildfire Hall — as the apartments devoted to their use were termed by the club. These rooms were, in general, spacious and handsome, and for the purposes of the profane ceremony with which they were wont to usher in the new year, were generally fitted up as a chapel. This apartment in Merlin's house was splendid beyond any other; and as he entered the room, his eyes for a moment became almost dazzled with the blaze of the innumerable wax lights which shone upon and around the mock altar.

At the grand banqueting table, twelve of his companions were seated in profound silence. By the side of the altar, at the end of the hall fitted up in imitation of the Catholic cathedrals, stood Rufus Rushton; and stretched upon the steps lay what appeared to be a human figure, but so enveloped in a mass of white drapery that Merlin could not distinguish whether the person thus concealed were living or dead, male or female; he judged it, however, to be the latter. The most remarkable part of the scene was the effect which he found acting upon himself the moment he entered the hall. Not one of the company moved or spoke; they did not even turn their heads or stir at his

entrance. They sat, stood, and looked rigid as statues, with the spell as of an enchanter's wand chaining them down to the life of the dead. But apart from the strange immobility of the scene, Merlin felt a powerful and almost tangible vapor arising, he knew not from whence or how, curdling around his own vitality, and locking up his senses in the same magnetic rigidity which he beheld around him. How long he stood in this fixed condition he never knew; he was accustomed to say if it were but a minute there was no such thing as time, for the experiences of a whole life were crowded into the period in which he stood. Beyond this, too, his acute sight took cognizance of a new and still more remarkable feature in the scene. As his eyes traversed the assembled company, he read on each face the entire character, life, actions, — ay, even thoughts and motives, — of each man's most secret soul. There was the rude fox-hunting squire, whose evergreen coat, bright brass buttons, and huge top-boots, seemed to cover up such a world of hearty, convivial good humor, and even benevolence within. Why did he now recognize him to be a bully, a coward, a tyrant, and a liar? The graceful, courteous aristocrat next to him, whose polished words and courtly smiles won for him the open sesame to every house and every heart, — why did he now perceive that he was a mean, fawning hypocrite, living on the weaknesses of humanity, by servilely flattering their foibles and administering to their passions? Could it be that the stern magistrate on his left, that unyielding censor of crime and trafficker in public justice, that even-handed lawgiver and model of indomitable virtue, — could he be a *thief*, a mere plunderer of his own father's desk, a receiver of bribes, a cheat, and a secret swindler? And yonder gallant soldier, the adored of women and the envied of men,

the champion of his country, and the fiery chevalier of the court of honor, — why did he now behold him, unmistakably flying from the enemy in battle, practising in gaming houses with loaded dice, and wearing a loathsome livery of fashion, as the concealed favorite of revolting old age, in the person of a celebrated dowager of immense wealth and high reputation?

There, too, sat his familiar friend, the gay and reckless child of fashion, a young peer, who had suddenly inherited unexpected rank and wealth. Heaven of mercy! what frightful psychology was that, which could stamp on his candid brow the red dye of *murder*, — murder of his own cousin, the real heir of the title he then wore, — while beside him sat a *trusty* physician, the guardian of the sick, and the smooth-lipped, familiar friend of unsuspicious families, who had mixed and administered the deadly draught which made the one man a peer, and the other a rich and fashionable physician? What shocking and yet mysterious revealments did the moveless lineaments of these familiar, yet most strange faces, now disclose! Whence came it? how did he know it all? and did his own face stand unmasked in the same appalling clearness?

And now his wild and haggard eyes are fixed on Rufus Rushton — eagerly he strains his gaze to read the mystery of that half-averted face. It needs not. On his very *form*, in the very atmosphere, he feels he is looking on a libertine, a scoffer, a ravisher; but O, above all this, he is looking on a baffled and convicted villain! It would be impossible to describe the mixture of terror, confusion, bravado, and yet despair, which thronged around the mind of the master, in sympathy with the "archangel ruined," upon whom he now gazed! And yet the whole sum of

the full revelation made in the form of Rushton could not have occupied above a few seconds, for it seemed almost, as his glance fell on him, that he became startled by a shrill, prolonged, and terrific shriek.

Chapter III.

Roused in an instant from his singular state of abstraction, his first impulse was to rush from the room, in order to ascertain the cause of the fearful outcry. It was so heart-rending, it seemed to combine so many voices, and to express such a world of woe, that it would have compelled a far less excitable temperament than Merlin's into instant inquiry. On entering the gallery which led to the apartment he had just quitted, he found all the domestics crowding on towards the room of meeting, all startled by the terrible cry, and all impressed with the belief that it issued from the club room. As Merlin advanced towards the terrified group, his steward preceded them, exclaiming, in tones of deep interest, —

"Good God, sir! what has happened? We feared you were all murdered. Has any harm come to Mr. Rushton? We heard his voice above the rest."

"Mr. Rushton!" stammered Merlin; "I heard no voice in *particular*, only I thought that all the fiends in torment must have been let loose, to give forth that hideous cry. Go, some of you, and search the Abbey through. I will join you as soon as I have spoken to my friends."

So saying, he returned to the apartments devoted to the club, to ascertain what effect the disturbance had had upon them. He returned to find the lights extinguished, and, by the broad glare of the flashing lightning, to perceive

that the room was entirely deserted by its late tenants. Bridegroom, bride, revellers, all were gone! and he stood in the vast apartment solitary and alone!

To summon the servants, to procure lights, and search the Abbey in every direction, was the work of the first hours of the new year. And when it finally dawned in the cold gray of a desolate and still stormy day, it found the perplexed inhabitants wholly at a loss to comprehend the mystery of the preceding night. The steward, who was deepest of all the domestics in the confidence of his master, testified to having lighted up the hall with his own hands — to having heard the footsteps of eleven persons passing up the secret stairs which led to the hall from the only door of entrance from without — to hearing some others sounding on the steps with an apparent effort to drag or carry up some heavy body — to hearing these last persons lock the door of entrance and pass into the hall. The custom of locking the door always devolved upon the thirteenth member, and the number which had preceded him was always ascertained by a reference to a score on the wall, where every member, as he entered, was required to chalk a cross.

If Merlin could have conceived the appearance of his guests to have been but a mere conception of his fancy, the evidence of the steward touching the lighting of the hall, the disturbance of the chairs, — which were removed from their formal position, scattered, and some overturned, as if a number of persons had been suddenly removed from them, — the fact that the door of entrance, which his own hand had unlocked at eleven o'clock, was now found locked, and above all, the appearance of thirteen crosses in chalk, recently made in the accustomed place, all bore testimony to the presence of some one, or something, be-

yond the capacity of the inhabitants of the Abbey to deny or yet account for. Still the mystery remained insoluble, and still the absence of the blind beggar and his various messengers aided to redouble the perplexity of Merlin. At length, late in the afternoon of the 1st of January, he resolved to go himself in quest of some of the "Wildfires," in order, if possible, to clear up the strange doubts which the whole affair was involved in. Just as he was setting off with the intention of making his way to the house of Rufus Rushton, he encountered one of his missing messengers.

The man appeared before him jaded and travel-soiled, alleging as the reason of his long delay, that the floods had risen in such force in every part of the country, that whole villages had been swept away, and that he himself, after much peril, had only escaped with his life. He bore, however, a missive from Rushton, evidently written the morning of the 31st of December, which ran as follows: —

"Brother Wildfire, greeting: I cannot, in all allegiance, comply with your request. 'The Wildfires' are here, assembled at my poor mansion of Luciferian reputation, and the floods are rising so rapidly on all sides, that I may not, without giving the old prophet (may the fiends confound and the saints disown him!) a chance of realizing his fell prediction, venture forth by boat, horse, or wagon. We, in our solemn council of Pandemonium, therefore, have concluded to invite you to be the victim of the altar, and by exposing your precious life to the risk of drowning, in order to come hither to us, — save thirteen lives intact, and only sacrifice one to the vengeance of the sorcerer. Thus, we trust, his wrath will be appeased, and if you die, which in all likelihood you will not, (a more

exalted fate evidently looming before so notorious a Wildfire as Reuben Merlin,) let us conclude with Scripture, that it is better one member should perish than that the whole body be cast into the *waters*."

This facetious epistle was signed by one of the members of the club, *for* Rufus Rushton, who, on his own part, added a few brief lines to the effect that, as the "Wildfires" were assembled at his house, to aid him in *a certain important matter*, and the rising of the waters had rendered the country almost impassable for the coach which would be necessary to convey a *bridal* party, it was desirable that Merlin should take horse and join the club on the appointed night at his (Rushton's) house.

"Ride, ride for your lives! Mount, Gabriel, Thomas, and Martin. Mount, all, and follow me!" shouted the master of the Abbey, as he read these letters, and himself dashed forward on his perilous road. Through brake and fence, over moss and morass, through torrent and river, across fords now swelled to cataracts, dashed the headlong rider. At length the swelling floods entirely destroying the landmarks which had once guided his way, compelled him to halt, and partly by offers of large rewards, and partly by desperate threats, he succeeded in urging some fishermen, whom he made many circuits to find, to embark with him in a boat, and make an effort to reach by sea the dwelling of Rufus Rushton. It was a large, solitary mansion, situated on the sea shore, and surrounded by a tract of flat, marshy land.

For the rest of that weary day, and all through the long succeeding night, did the rowers ply their oars; and still, when morning dawned, and the exhausted mariners refused any longer to advance, Reuben Merlin gazed over a trackless waste of waters.

"A few minutes longer, my men, only a few minutes longer!" cried the eager master, "and we must reach the spot. See there! By heavens! there is the identical castle rock, the lighthouse, and giant's cradle, which show we are *at the very spot!* But in the name of God where is the castle, and what has become of the 'Rushton arms,' the fields, rocks, and hedges? I see nothing but waters! Can the sea have swept over the land, or are we the subjects of a hideous phantasmagoria?"

"Yonder is all that we shall ever see of the castle on this earth," replied one of the boatmen, pointing, as he spoke, to some few feet of battlemented buildings just appearing above the surface of the water, not many rods from where they lay; "and we are now sailing *above* the castle, the hotel, fields, rocks, and hedges which you ask for; whether those you came to seek are *beneath* or *above* us, just now, God alone can tell. But they say that just at midnight, between the death of the old year and the birth of the new, the villagers up there on Solway Crags, heard the shriek of a number of drowning souls. The sound was very awful, and rung out for miles over the sea. We heard it off away there in our shanties, and it came like a cry from the bottomless pit of Scripture. Might it not have been the death wail of Master Rushton's new year's night party?"

"Doubtless!" murmured the horror-struck Merlin; "and yet, *living or dead*, they kept their word, and *did* meet in that room, December 31, 17—, at midnight!"

Many weeks after this occurrence, the waters subsided sufficiently for the magistrates to institute a search for the bodies of those who perished in the terrible floods of that memorable new year's night. The castle had disappeared forever. The influx of the sea, combining with that of

the swelling tides of the land floods, rolled in peaceful tides over the dwelling of Rufus Rushton, and sang the funeral requiem over every soul that his roof harbored that fatal night.

But two bodies were ever recovered. The one was an old silver-haired man, whose tattered garments were supposed to bear testimony to the ideality of blind Sandy, the beggar. The fact that the body was found *with one hand cut off*, evidently dissevered by a blow, proved that other causes of death had run riot in that terrible house on the fatal thirty-first. Clasped tightly to his breast, and still encircled in the arms of the dead, was a female, clothed in white garments; but the sullen waters which had formed her winding sheet had laved away every trace of what might have been once fair and lovely, and left no proofs, beyond surmise, that it was Margaret, the beautiful fairy of the glen, whom few had seen except in passing or stolen glances, around whom busy tongues had enwreathed legends of mystery and ideality, from the fame of her beauty, the fact of her strange seclusion, and, above all, her relationship to the dreaded prophet, blind Sandy.

Many years after these events Mr. Merlin reappeared in the neighborhood from foreign lands, where he had been wandering in pursuit of the lore which old India, ruined Egypt, and philosophic Germany alone could give him. The records of "The Wildfire Club," almost its very memory, had passed away in the depths of the fearful floods which had ingulfed all its members but this one, and in him, the stern and gloomy ascetic — the scholar of strange systems and unknown lands — none would have ever recognized its founder.

All the wild tales which had grown up out of the fantastic doings of this association, and especially their awful

exit from the scene of their orgies, soon came to be revived in the person of Reuben Merlin, when it was found that he actually set to work to establish a kind of order, or sect, one of whose chief points of doctrine was a firm belief in the existence of the soul after death, and *the possibility of its return to earth.*

The Merlinites, as his followers were termed, did not gain many converts; and, as has been before stated, with Reuben Merlin's decease they died out altogether; yet though their doctrines, and the impelling causes which brought the sect into being, are no more remembered, the old Abbey was long the theme of ghostly legends and general terror, especially on the last night of the old year, when it was said the galleries and hall were brilliantly illuminated by no mortal hands, while a revel was held by thirteen shadowy forms, who had bound themselves, *living or dead*, to assemble at midnight, at that place, on the last night of every year, till the ages of a mysterious penance for unatoned sin should have passed away.

There may not be one truly earnest or self-possessed mind who puts faith in the legend of the doomed revellers' assemblage on this night, and yet there are few who could be found bold enough to stand by the old postern gate at midnight on the 31st of December, to listen to the eleven footsteps ascending the stairs, and the two shuffling forward as if sustaining a heavy weight, while the last sound of all, say those "*whose fathers have heard these sounds*," was the grating of the closing lock, — few, we say, are found bold enough to test the truth of these legends on the night in question; yet there are many who to this day declare, that in the hour which stands, like the gate of the tomb, between the earth of the old year and the heaven of the new, there is ever heard, far

and wide, over sea and land, through hamlet and town, a wild shriek, — long, shrill, heart-rending, like the cry of many perishing souls parting in the sudden disruption of strong, vigorous life, but seared and fearful consciences. The mariner far out at sea shivers with a chill keener than the biting blast, as he hears the awful cry, while the fisherman mutters a prayer, little children crouch beneath their mothers' aprons, and all pious men and women send up a fervent aspiration for peace to the unresting souls of The Wildfire Club.

NOTE.

"*Children and fools speak the truth.*"

So says an ancient proverb. Apply this to the children of civilization, the first born of nature, the ancients, — sublime in their simple obedience to the rudimentary principles of natural, and therefore true life, — and you will understand why they ever taught in parables. Life is made up of living, busy, active forms — not of dry essays and metaphysical theories; and so the most profound sentiments, and the most philosophical propositions find their most comprehensible illustrations in life's living pictures. The parable of the Good Samaritan, though but a simple story, — one which would not be out of place in a child's Primer, — brings home the true science of life and happiness, with a force which Locke and Bacon have failed to demonstrate in all their quartos. If this be not a sufficient apology for the professed lecturer on metaphysics and mental science generally, attempting to illustrate certain profound and startling revelations — even to lifting the tremendous veil which shadows the tomb itself — in the unpretending guise of a club of simple stories, she has none other to offer.

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